

## DECLARATION

I, Sanjay Biswas, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of research work done by me, that the content of this thesis did not form the basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to do the best my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University or Institute.

This is being submitted to the University of North Bengal for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Geography and Applied Geography.

*Sanjay Biswas*

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Dated: 16.08.2023

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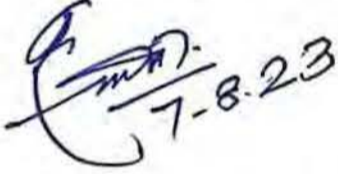
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**CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that **Sanjay Biswas**, a Research Scholar of the Department of Geography & Applied Geography, University of North Bengal, Raja Rammohunpur has carried out this research work entitled "**Causes and Effects of Flash Flood in Alipurduar District, West Bengal**" under my supervision which is being submitted to the University of North Bengal for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in Geography & Applied Geography under the faculty of science.

This thesis is based on the original work done by the researcher. He has fulfilled all the requirements as per the regulation of the University for submission of the Ph. D Thesis.

This thesis as a whole or any part of it has not been submitted to any other University/ Institution for any other degree.

  
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## Document Information

Analyzed document	Sanjay Biswas_Geography and Applied Geography.pdf (D172627147)
Submitted	2023-08-07 07:23:00
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Submitter email	nbuplg@nbu.ac.in
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## Sources included in the report

W URL: [https://ir.nbu.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/1335/17/17\\_chapter\\_07.pdf](https://ir.nbu.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/1335/17/17_chapter_07.pdf)  
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## Entire Document

i CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF FLASH FLOOD IN ALIPURDUAR DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL A Thesis submitted to the University of North Bengal for the Award of the Doctor of Philosophy in Geography & Applied Geography Submitted by SANJAY BISWAS Under the Supervision of Dr. D. K. MANDAL Professor Department of Geography & Applied Geography UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL AUGUST, 2023

1 CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION 1.0 Introduction Flash floods are rapid and devastating natural phenomena that pose significant threats to both human lives and infrastructure. They occur when an excessive amount of rainfall overwhelms the capacity of the drainage system or when intense rainfall occurs in a short period. Flash floods can arise in various geographical regions, affecting both urban and rural areas, and are known to cause significant damage and loss of life worldwide. The study area, i.e. Alipurduar has a variety of physical characteristics. The northern part of the District shared a boundary with Bhutan Himalaya, and southern border joined with the Coochbehar District. Physically the District is marked by the river Sankos in the eastern part, and the Jalpaiguri District marks the western region. There are many rivers which are flowing through the District. Sources of these rivers are mainly from Bhutan Himalaya. All the rivers are flowing north to south direction. In the last few decades, flash floods have frequently affected the study area, which create aggradations in this area. Flooding is the unusual presence of water on land to a depth that affects normal life. There are many types of floods, like river floods, flash floods, coastal floods, tidal floods, etc. Defining a flash flood is difficult because flash floods are complex phenomena and partly because they are viewed differently by different people., a flash flood is a body of water which rises to overflow land which is not normally submerged and subsides after only a few hours (Roy,1978). River flood and flash flooding usually result from abnormally high rainfall over relatively short period. Flash flood are most frequently associated with violent, convectional storms which tend to be of short duration, often measured in minutes rather than hours (Morgan,1966). There is a term used, hours for flash floods and days for river floods. A flash flood is, in short, a sudden local flood of great volume and short duration which follows within a few (usually less than six) hours of heavy or excessive rainfall, or due to dam or levee failure, or the sudden release of water it takes place in a saturated area where rain has previously fallen or the sudden release of water impounded by an ice log jam. A flash flood can be caused by intense rain, particularly when it takes place in a saturated area where rain has previously fallen or the ground is frozen. In these conditions the additional rain runs off over the surface and accumulates in streams and rivers at a much-accelerated pace. Heavy rain, most frequently connected with convection clouds, cover small regions and are short-lived (from a few minutes to a few hours), but very intense such a 100 mm (or 100 litres per square meter) in the span of an hour or more. Violent rainfall causing flash floods can be accompanied by strong winds and heavy hail formation. They can also appear locally in a large area covered

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*Dedicated to*

*My father, Shyamal Biswas*

*and*

*Mother, Sandhya Biswas*

## PREFACE

Flash floods pose a significant challenge in regions with diverse topography, and the Sub-Himalayan Dooars area is no exception. Alipurduar District, located within this region, regularly experiences the devastating effects of flash floods. This study aims to provide an overview of the factors contributing to flash floods in the District, the impact on the local ecosystem and socio-economy, and the potential measures that can be undertaken to minimize the damage caused by these natural disasters. The Sub-Himalayan Dooars region is characterized by its varied topography, which directly influences the severity of flash floods. Alipurduar District, situated in the heart of the Dooars area, faces recurring flash floods in its hilly areas and foothills, particularly those to the north. The rivers originating from the Bhutan Himalayas play a crucial role in triggering sudden slope changes and heavy rainfall. As these rivers traverse the Alipurduar District, they carry substantial amounts of water, sand, and stones accumulated during their long journey through the Bhutan Himalayas. When these rivers reach the foothill areas, they deposit excess water, sand, and stones, leading to the elevation of riverbeds. Consequently, flash floods occur sporadically during the monsoon season. While natural factors contribute significantly to flash floods in Alipurduar District, human activities such as mining, quarrying and deforestation have further exacerbated their impact. These activities directly disrupt the natural balance, making the District more vulnerable to flash floods. However, the presence of forests in the foothill areas has played a crucial role in minimizing the effects of flash floods, serving as a natural barrier against their destructive force. Regrettably, the occurrence of flash floods in Alipurduar District has far-reaching consequences. The District's economy heavily relies on the tea industry and cultivation, both of which suffer significant disruptions due to flash floods. The damage caused by these floods extends beyond the economic sector, impacting the local ecosystem and livelihoods of the residents. In some instances, residential areas in the northern part of the District become isolated and inaccessible during the monsoon period, exacerbating the challenges faced by the local population.

While natural disasters like flash floods are beyond human control, there are measures that can be implemented to mitigate their impact on Alipurduar District. The adoption of sophisticated forecasting and warning systems can provide crucial lead time for residents and authorities to prepare and respond effectively to impending flash floods. Additionally, raising awareness among the District's population about the dangers associated with flash floods and promoting community resilience can contribute significantly to minimizing the damage caused

by these events. Co-operation between local communities and the District administration is paramount in implementing effective strategies to prevent and mitigate the devastating effects of flash floods. Finally, the challenges posed by flash floods in Alipurduar District require a comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to their occurrence. This study highlights the influence of topography, river systems, human activities, and the economic and ecological impact of flash floods. By implementing proactive measures such as advanced forecasting systems, community awareness initiatives, and collaborative efforts between stakeholders, it is possible to minimize the damage caused by flash floods and build a more resilient Alipurduar District.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, to complete the entire work, I am deeply indebted to my supervisor Prof. Deepak Kumar Mandal, for his all support, thoughtful encouragements and informed guidance. He allowed me a great deal of freedom during my research period. His optimistic attitude, everlasting patience, deep understanding of the subject matter and enthusiasm have helped me explore different ideas that will remain with me for my entire life.

I would like to thank Prof. Subir Sarkar, former Professor, Department of Geography & Applied Geography, University of North Bengal. He is the person who introduced me to the exciting world of fluvial geomorphology. His deep knowledge across the field helped me to understand any complicated matter in a very simple manner. I am especially grateful to Prof. Ranjan Roy for his various suggestions from student life till now. I am thankful my teachers Dr. Sudip Bhattacharya, Dr. Arindam Basak, Dr. Snehasish Saha, Dr. Indrajit Roy Choudhury and Dr. Rupak Kumar Paul. I am grateful to our madams Prof. Sushma Rohatgi, Dr. Indira Lepcha, and Dr. Riti Moktan.

I am very thankful to my teachers Dr. Bipul Chandra Sarkar, Dr. Subhash Sengupta, Mr. Sumit Kumar Das, and Mr. Gopal Mohan Sikdar who has motivated me in different ways. I am thankful to the personnel of NBU library and all non-teaching staff of the Dept. of Geography and Applied Geography, NBU. I am thankful Mr. Sudipta Sarkar, Executive engineer, CWC, Jalpaiguri Division and Mr. Saurabh Kumar, Assistant Director, CWC, Kolkata for providing related data and information. I am thankful to Mr. M. Singha, Executive Engineer, Irrigation and Waterways Department, Alipurduar Division for providing related data and information. I am thankful to Dr. Sudeshna Das, Assistant Director of Agriculture, Falakata Block for providing me with related data and information. I am thankful to Mr. Bagchi, Secretary, DBITA, Binnaguri, West Bengal for providing related data and information.

My sincere thanks to journalist and teacher Mostaque Morshed Hossain of Uttarbanga Sambad who helped me to collect various flash flood related photographs. I am extremely grateful to my brothers Mr. Nanigopal Barman, Mr. Ashutosh Saha, Mr. Shekhar Sharma. I am eternally thankful to my childhood friends Biplob, Mridul, Jit, Rakesh and Kanai for helping me during the field observation. My special thanks goes to Goutam Mandal and Dipesh Roy for any discussion related to the result analysis.

I would like to thank dear Ratna, Partha, Joy, Rajib, Arghadeep, Prabir, Golap, Ajit, Tuhin, Arkadip, Bhupesh, Sujoy, Kunal, Sanjoy, Arjun, Surajit, Mamun, Kanchan, Amit, Debasish, Guddu, Sanju, Samir and Keshab for their help during the field visit and encouraging me to carry out my work. I am thankful to the managers of different tea gardens for providing data and information. I am thankful to my sister Minati Barman who looked after my daughter with extra care and helped me to do the research work freely.

I am grateful to my wife Mrs. Binita Roy for her unwavering support and patience during my research period. I am grateful to my daughter who has been deprived of my love during the end of my research period. I am grateful to my father for whose encouragement I entered the field of research. Finally, I would like to thank my mother, mother-in-law, father-in-law, elder brother, sister, sister-in-law and brother-in-law. Their unconditional love and support always have been my strength and will remain my inspiration throughout my life.

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Dated: 16.08.2023

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## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table No.</b>	<b>Description of the Table</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
2.1	Detail descriptions of soil in Alipurduar District	18
2.2	Mean monthly temperature of study area (1990 to 2020)	20
2.3	Mean annual and highest rainfall from different stations in Alipurduar District	21
2.4	Description of forests in Alipurduar District	23
2.5	Land use and Land cover patterns of Alipurduar District	26
2.6	Block level demographic profile of Alipurduar District	27
2.7	Annual crop production rate in Alipurduar District	28
3.1	Area of the Watersheds under study	34
3.2	Major rivers and their Tributaries in Alipurduar District	36
4.1	Monthly average Rainfall (mm) in Alipurduar Town from 1990 to 2019	71
4.2	High intensity Rainfall in Alipurduar District in 1993	74
4.3	High intensity Rainfall in Alipurduar District in 1996	75
4.4	High intensity Rainfall in Alipurduar District in 1998	76
4.5	High intensity Rainfall in Alipurduar District in 2000	77
4.6	High intensity Rainfall in Alipurduar District in 2004	78
4.7	High intensity Rainfall in Alipurduar District in 2007	80
4.8	High intensity Rainfall in Alipurduar District in 2010	82
4.9	High intensity Rainfall in Alipurduar District in 2013	84
4.10	High intensity Rainfall in Alipurduar District in 2014	86
4.11	High intensity Rainfall in Alipurduar District in 2016	87
4.12	High intensity Rainfall in Alipurduar District in 2017	89
4.13	Events of Flash Floods in Alipurduar District, 1993 to 2017	91-92
4.14	River wise mine out and replenishment rate of Alipurduar District	101
5.1	Calculation of Recurrence Interval of Torsa River at Hasimara (1998-2007)	110
5.2	Calculation of Recurrence Interval of Raidak-I River at Chepani (1998-2007)	111
5.3	Calculation of Recurrence Interval of Raidak-II River at Barobisa (1998-2007)	112
5.4	Frequency of Flood in the District of Alipurduar (1961-2000)	113
5.5	Temporal Variation of FFMI in Torsa River measured at Hasimara	116

	(1992-2019)	
5.6	Temporal Variation of FEMI in Raidak-I River measured at Chepani (1992-2019)	118
5.7	Temporal Variation of FEMI in Raidak-II River measured at Barobisa (1992-2019)	119
5.8	Number of Flash Flood in Different Magnitude	121
5.9	Flood Prone areas of the District	121
5.10	Flood Level of different rivers of Alipurduar District	123
5.11	Calculated Peak Discharge of Various river in the District under the Brahmaputra River Basin	124
5.12	Last 31 years (1990-2020) Maximum Water (Gauge level) level of different rivers of Alipurduar District	125
5.13	Flash flood events/period in different year during 1990-2020	128
5.14	Discharge (cumec) and water level (m) of different rivers during flash flood in 1993	129
5.15	Discharge (cumec) and water level (m) of different rivers during flash flood in 1998	130
5.16	Discharge (cumec) and water level (m) of different rivers during flash flood in 2000	131
5.17	Discharge (cumec) and water level (m) of different rivers during flash flood in 2007	132
5.18	Discharge (cumec) and water level (m) of different rivers during flash flood in 2010	133
5.19	Discharge (cumec) and water level (m) of different rivers during flash flood in 2017	134
5.20	Relationship between FFMI and Rainfall of Torsha River Basin	135
5.21	Relationship between FFMI and Rainfall of Raidak-I River Basin	136
5.22	Relationship between FFMI and Rainfall of Raidak-II River Basin	137
6.1	Human lives lost during flash flood in Alipurduar District in 1993	147
6.2	Cattle lives lost during flash flood in Alipurduar District in 1993	148
6.3	Human lives lost during flash flood in Alipurduar District in 2017	148
6.4	Health related problems due to flash flood in Alipurduar District (1993-2017)	149

6.5	Family Size of the respondents	151
6.6	Educational Status of Alipurduar District	152
6.7	Religious compositions of Alipurduar District.	152
6.8	Caste compositions in Alipurduar District	154
6.9	Occupational status of Alipurduar District	155
6.10	Shelter during flash flood	156
6.11	Rescue types	157
6.12	Types of facilities provided to the victims	157
6.13	Damages due to flash flood in Alipurduar District	158
6.14	Effects of flash flood in different sectors in Alipurduar District during 2017	161
6.15	GP wise effects of flash flood in Falakata block in 2017	161
6.16	Social indicators for socio-economic determinant	163
6.17	Economic indicators for socio-economic determinant	165
6.18	Tea Plantation Area, Production and Yielding of Bandapani, Makrapara and Joybirpara TG (2001-2014)	167
6.19	Effects of Flash Flood in Tea Gardens in Alipurduar District in 1993	168
6.20	Effects of flash flood on Tea Gardens in Alipurduar District in 1993	168
6.21	Effects of Flash Flood in Tea Gardens in Alipurduar District in 1998	171
6.22	Effects of Flash Flood in Tea Gardens in Alipurduar District in 2000	173
6.23	Effects of Flash Flood in Tea Gardens in Alipurduar District in 2004	174
6.24	Effects of Flash Flood in Tea Gardens in Alipurduar District in 2007	176
6.25	Effects of Flash Flood in Tea Gardens in Alipurduar District in 2017	178
6.26	Effects of Flash Flood in Tea Gardens of Alipurduar District (1993 - 2017)	179
6.27	Effects of flash flood on Buxa-Jayanti forest (1990-2008)	180
6.28	Effects of flash flood on forest in Alipurduar District in 2017	180
6.29	Effects of flash flood on forests in Alipurduar District in 1993-2017	180
6.30	Effects of flash flood on forests of Alipurduar District (1993-2017)	181
6.31	Severely Affected Forest in Alipurduar District (1993-2017)	184
6.32	Migration due to flash flood in Alipurduar District	187
6.33	Physio-chemical properties of sample water from different rivers in Alipurduar District	197-198
6.34	Water Quality Index ( <i>based on Weight Arithmetic Water Quality Index Method</i> ) of Selected River Sights in Alipurduar District, 2017	206

6.35	Water Quality Index ( <i>based on Weight Arithmetic Water Quality Index Method</i> ) of Selected River Sights in Alipurduar District, 2019	207
6.36	Transformation of index value from pre-monsoon to monsoon period in 2017	208
6.37	Transformation of index value from pre-monsoon to monsoon period in 2019	210
6.38	Soil Properties of different Places of Alipurduar District	214
6.39	Raising of river beds in different rivers of Alipurduar District (1985-2013)	217
6.40	Rising of river bed in different rivers of Alipurduar	219
7.1	Vulnerable river banks of Alipurduar District	237
7.2	Structural and non-structural measures for flash flood risk management	252

## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>Figure No.</b>	<b>Description of the Figure</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
1.1	Location map of the study area	4
2.1	Geomorphology of Alipurduar District	15
2.2	Geological Map of Alipurduar District	17
2.3	Soil Map of Alipurduar District	18
2.4	Overall temperature condition of Alipurduar District from 1990 to 2020	20
2.5	Mean Annual Rainfall of Alipurduar District	21
2.6	Graphical representation of mean monthly rainfall distribution in the period of 1990 to 2020 of Alipurduar District	22
2.7	Description of forests in Alipurduar District	24
2.8	Vegetation cover and Tea Plantations of Alipurduar District	24
2.9	Land use and land cover map of Alipurduar District	26
2.10	Annual crop production rate in Alipurduar District	29
3.1	Drainage system map of Alipurduar District	35
3.2	Torsa River Basin in Alipurduar District	38
3.3	Jayanti River Basin in Alipurduar District	40
3.4	Mujnai River Basin in Alipurduar District	43
3.5	Kaljani River Basin in Alipurduar District	46
3.6	Raidak-I River Basin in Alipurduar District	49
3.7	Raidak-II River Basin in Alipurduar District	50
3.8	River Channel transformation of Rehti river, 1984 & 2019	64
4.1	Rainfall Occurrences during peak months (Jun, July, August and September) of different years in Alipurduar District 1990 to 2019	72
4.2	Rainfall at Different Recording Station in Alipurduar District	74
4.3	High intensity rainstorm in Alipurduar District in 1996	75
4.4	High intensity rainstorm in Alipurduar District in 1998	76
4.5	High intensity rainstorm in Alipurduar District in 2000	77
4.6	Heavy Rainfall in Alipurduar District in 2004	79
4.7	Rainfall in Alipurduar District during 2007 Flash Flood	81
4.8	Heavy Rainfall in Alipurduar District in 2010	83
4.9	High Intensity Rainfall in Alipurduar District in 2013	85
4.10	High Intensity Rainfall in Alipurduar District in 2014	86

4.11 High Intensity Rainfall in Alipurduar District in 2017	89
5.1 Recurrence Interval of Torsa River at Hasimara (1998-2007)	110
5.2 Flood Frequency Curve of Raidak I at Chepani during 1998-2007	111
5.3 Recurrence Interval of Raidak II River at Barobisa (1998-2007)	112
5.4 Frequency of Flood in the District of Alipurduar (1961-2000)	113
5.5 Flash Flood Susceptibility Zone of Alipurduar District	114
5.6 Flash flood affected places of Alipurduar District	115
5.7 Temporal Variation of FFMI in Torsa River measured at Hasimara (1992 to 2019)	117
5.8 Scatter plots showing the correlation between Rainfall and FFMI score of three main river of Alipurduar District	139
6.1 Human lives lost during flash flood in Alipurduar District in 1993	147
6.2 Family size of the respondents	151
6.3 Educational status of Alipurdsuar District	152
6.4 Religious compositions of Alipurduar District	152
6.5 Caste composition in Alipurduar District	154
6.6 Occupational status of Alipurduar District	155
6.7 Shelter during flash flood	156
6.8 Rescue types	157
6.9 Facilities provided to the victims	157
6.10 Flash flood affected tea gardens of Alipurduar District	172
6.11 Flash flood affected forests in Alipurduar District	183
6.12 River water sample collection sites map of Alipurduar District	199
6.13 Soil sample collection sites map of Alipurduar District	213
6.14 Selected sites for measuring river aggradation in major flash flood affected rivers of Alipurduar District.	218
6.15 Channel shifting of Basra and Pana River from 1985 to 2022	225
6.16 Channel shifting of Titi River from 1985 to 2022	226
7.1 Vulnerable river banks of Alipurduar District	236
7.2 Modification of cropping pattern to suit flooding period	242
7.3 Flash flood management measures (Parker 2000)	250
7.4 Flash flood warning system (after Colton and Burnash, 1978)	258
7.5 Flash flood warning system (modified by researcher after McLuckie, 1978)	259

## LIST OF PLATES

Plate No.	Description of the Plate	Page No.
3.1	Morphological Features of Torsa River, (a) meandering channel near Shibnathpur, Mora Torsa River has formed the meander at this place due to decreasing slope and presence of sandy soil, (b) sand bars near Sidhabari, (c) Due to meandering pattern of the Mora Torsa River formation of point bar near Kunjanagar, (d) Braided channels are developed for the variation of water flow from time to time on Torsa River near Hasimara.	54
3.2	Morphological features of Raidak I and II Rivers, (a) Meandering channel near Chhipra forest, Raidak-I River has formed the meander at this place due to decreasing slope and presence of sandy soil, (b) Formation of Ox-bow-lake due to meandering cut off near Chilakhana, (c) anabranching channel, (d) A point bar formed near Chikliguri for construction of Bridge on Raidak-I River.	56
3.3	Morphological features of Sankosh River, (a) Braided Channel, (b) Sand bars formed on Sankosh River due to deposition of sands carried by river from upper catchment area.	57
3.4	Morphological features of Kaljani River (a) meander, Sand bars and point bars, (b) ox-bow lake.	58
3.5	Morphological features of Mujnai River, (a) Ox-bow lake formed near Falakata due to change of Mujnai River course, (b) A point bar formed near Bhutnirghat on opposite site of meandering channel, (c) meandering channel, (d) river island formed near Baganbari due to long time sediment deposition.	59
3.6	Alluvial Fans, (a) Garochera River near Bandapani, (b) Basra River near Chota Jaigaon, (c) Pagli River near Makrapara, (d) Jayanti River near Jayanti.	61
3.7	Bank erosion on different rivers in Alipurduar District; (a) Raymatang River near Raymatang forest office; (b) Pagli River near Dalmore; (c) Mora Torsa River near Kunjanagar; (d) Dhumchi River near Dhumchi TG.	63

- 4.1 (a) Reporting of Flash flood during Monsoonal season in Alipurduar, 1993 (Source: The Statesman, 27<sup>Th</sup> July, 1993), (b) Shops in Alipurduar town submerged by the flash flood of 1993. 74
- 4.2 (a) Flash flood water inundate Subhashini TG of Kalchini Block in 2007 (Source: Pravat Khabar, 29 July, 2007), (b) Flash flood washed away some portion of Bandapani TG in Madarihat-Birpara block in 2007 (Source: DBITA, Binnaguri). 81
- 4.3 (a) River bank erosion due to flash flood near Sishubari of Madarihat-Birpara block in 2010, (b) Flash flood water flowing in high velocity at Jamtala of Madarihat-Birpara block in 2010. 83
- 4.4 (a) Due to heavy rainfall in the foothill areas of Alipurduar District on 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2016, the water of Bangri and Titi River entered the Jamtala area and caused flash flood situation and areas like Hantapara, Totopara, Ballalguri etc. are disconnected from Madarihat, (b) Due to heavy rainfall in Bhutan Himalaya and the foothill areas of Alipurduar District in 2016 the water of Sukhti River and Garochera River entered the Bandapani area and caused flash flood situation and Garochera-Bandapani road was washed away. 88
- 4.5 Impacts of flash flood in Alipurduar District in 2017, (a). Road washed away near Rangalibazna of Madarihat-Birpara block, (b) Vehicle damaged due to sudden flash flood in Mujnai River near Mujnai TG, (b) Water Inundation after Flash flood near Tapshikatha, (d) flash flood water passing through a house near Mechpara of Kalchini block. 90
- 4.6 (a) Constructions of passenger shed on Howri River bed at Totopara, (b) Extension of concrete road across the Sukhti River near Bandapani, (c) Permanent boulder embankment along the Pagli River at north-eastern Makrapara, (d) Unscientific construction of culvert on Mora Torsha River in Falakata-Alipurduar road. 97
- 4.7 (a) Permanent embankment and narrowing of channel for railway bridge construction on Dima River, (b) Narrowing of channel for railway bridge construction on Rethi and Sukhti River near Dimdima. 98

4.8	(A) River side built-up areas - (a) Satellite view of cement factories along the Basra & Bura Basra River, (b) On-site photograph of various cement factories along the Basra River.	99
4.9	(a) In-stream quarrying of boulders from Dhumchi River near Dhumchi TG, (b) In-stream quarrying of sand from Pagli River near Dalmore TG (c) Extraction of boulders from Kalapani River near Bandapani, (d) In-stream quarrying activities on Garochera River near Bandapani.	102
4.10	(a) Crusher installed in hilly slope for Dolomite crushing at Pagli (near Lankapara) in Bhutan, (b) Researcher investigating the mined Dolomite at Pagli in Bhutan, (c) Dolomite transporting Pagli through Pagli River near Lankapara SSB camp, (d) In-stream boulder and sand quarrying in Sukthi River near west of Makrapara.	104
6.1	Various newspaper report on damages of human lives due to flash flood in Alipurduar District, (a) The Statesman, 27 <sup>th</sup> July, 1993; (b) Anandabazar Patrika, 11 <sup>th</sup> August, 1993; (c) Anandabazar Patrika 10 <sup>th</sup> August, 1993; (d) The Statesman, 11 <sup>th</sup> August, 1993.	147
6.2	Researcher engaging with respondents during field visits, (a) Parmalinga Basti of Kalchini block; (b) Ballalguri; (c) Bandapani; (d) Dalmore of Madarihat-Birpara block (e) On river bed of Kalikhola with a dweller of Kumargram forest Basti; (f) During the field visit of flash flood affected Bandapani forest in 2017 with a dweller of Bandapani who guided me lots to reach the remote areas.	153
6.3	Changing pattern of crops in flash flood affected areas of Alipurduar District, (a) Marowa cultivation in Totopara of Madarihat-Birpara block; (b) Ber apple cultivation in Salkumar of Alipurduar-I block; (c) Banana Cultivation in Deagoan of Falakata block; (d) Orange and areca nut plantation in Totopara.	160
6.4	Some public and private properties damaged by flash flood in Alipurduar District; (a) road affected at Rangamati of Kalchini block in 2017, (b) Jayanti bridge destroyed by 1993 flash flood, (c) a house damaged due to Mujnai River near Deagoan of Falakata block, (d) a public deep tube well near Ballalguri almost cover up due to flash flood in 2019, (e) a ICDS centre washed away by Bangri River near Hantapara of Madarihat-Birpara block,	162

- (f) Birbari bridge (Gobarjyoti) washed away by flash flood near Jaygaon of Kalchini block.
- 6.5 Impact of flash flood on different Tea Gardens in Alipurduar District, (a) & (f) dolomite mixed flash flood water damaged Lankapara tea garden; (b) Died tea plants in Makrapara TG; (c) News covered by Uttarbanga Sambad on flash flood affected tea gardens of Alipurduar District, 28<sup>th</sup> august, 1998; (d) Uttarbanga Sambad newspaper reported effects of flash flood on tea industry of Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar, 9<sup>th</sup> August, 1993; (e) flash flood eroded Dhumchi tea garden area in 2017 flash flood. 170
- 6.6 Impacts of flash flood on tea gardens in Alipurduar District, (a) & (b) tea plant washed away from Tulsipara TG by Guya River, (c) bank failure of Kalapani River along the Bandapani TG, (d) tea plant washed away from Bandapani TG by Rethi River, (e) bank failure of Rethi River along the Dekhlapara TG, (f) bank failure of Pagli River along Dalmore TG, (g) tea plant and shed tree damaged at Gopalpur TG, (h) tea plant washed away from Makrapara TG by Sirkikhola River. 175
- 6.7 Damage of forest cover in flash flood affected areas of Alipurdua District, (a) Bandapani forest due to Garochera River; (b) since the last few decades' dolomite mixed flash flood water destroying Titi forest near Lankapara; (c) Buxa forest near Jayanti affected by flash flood severely since 1993; (d) Bhutri forest near Rangamati destroyed due to flash flood in 2017; (e) Jaldapara forest near Kunjanagar of Falakata block damaged by Mara Torsa River due to flash flood in 2019; (f) Buxa forest destroying day by day due to dolomite mixed flash flood water near Raymatang of Kalchini block. 185
- 6.8 Houses damaged due to occurrences of flash floods in Alipurduar District, (a) flash flood affected house of Norin Roy at Mallikpara of Paschim Khairbari; (b) A house at Barahaliya of Ballalguri was damaged due to flash flood water flowing through the house. 187
- 6.9 Damages of constructions due to flash flood in Alipurduar District, (a) Mara Torsa bridge on Falakata-Alipurduar road washed away due to flash flood in 2017; (b) PWD road near Radharani TG of Kalchini block damaged due to flash flood in 2019; (c) Culvert damaged at Madhya Chekamari of Madarihat-Birpara block due to flash flood in 2017; (d) Road and culvert connecting 189

- Bandapani and Garochera damaged by flash flood in 2017; (e) Jayanti bidge before 1993 flash flood; (f) Jayanti bridge in 2021.
- 6.10 Impacts of flash flood on agricultural field in Alipurduar District, (a) Google earth image showing invasion of flash flood debris on the agricultural field at Jamtala of Madarihat-Birpara block after 2019 flash flood, (b) agricultural land covered by flash flood debris after 2017 flash flood at Jamtala, (c) Jamtala after 2019 flash flood, (d) agricultural land covered by flash flood debris near Ballalguri, (e) agricultural land failure by Mujnai River near Deagaon. 191
- 6.11 Impacts of mining and quarrying on river water in different rivers in Alipurduar District, (a) google earth image showing the dolomite mining fields of Pagli in Bhutan, (b) dolomite crushing machine installed at Pagli in Bhutan, (c) researcher during field survey at Pagli and observing dolomite powder placed near factory, (d) dolomite mixed water observing by researcher in Pagli River near Lankapara of Madarihat-Birpara block, (e) dolomite dust accumulated in Sukthi River bed near Makrapara, (f) hard form of dolomite in Raymatang River, (g) quarrying in Raidak- II River near Barabisa, (h) quarrying in Dimdima River. 194
- 6.12 Recording of pH and TDS level in river water during field observation in Alipurduar District, (a) Raidak-II River near Barobisa during monsoon 2017, (b) Jayanti River near Jayanti during pre-monsoon 2019, (c) Titi River near Lankapara during monsoon 2019, (d) Dimdima River near Ethelbari during pre-monsoon 2019. 196
- 6.13 Water samples collection from different rivers of Alipurduar District; (a) Titi River near Lankapara during pre-monsoon 2017, (b) Titi River near Lankapara during monsoon 2017, (c) Jayanti River during pre-monsoon 2019, (d) Jayanti River during monsoon 2019, (e) Mujnai River near Sisubari during pre-monsoon 2019, (f) Raidak-II River near Barobisa during pre-monsoon 2017, (g) Torsa River near Kathalbari during monsoon 2019, (h) Holong River near Madarihat during pre-monsoon 2017. 204
- 6.14 (a) During soil sample collection from Dalmore of Madarihat-Birpara block in 2012, (b) During soil sample collection from Chikliguri of Alipurduar-II block in 2019, (c) Collected soils placed for moisture dry, (d) soils testing 212

by researcher in pedology laboratory at Dept. of Geography and Applied Geography, NBU.

- 6.15 Measurement sites of river bed rising in different rivers in Alipurduar District; (a) & (b) Rymatang River before and after monsoon 2019, (c) & (d) Titi River near Hantapara before and after monsoon 2021, (e) & (f) Pana River near Radharani TG 2019 & 2021, (g) & (h) Jayanti River in 2014 & 2021. 215
- 6.16 Bank failure in different rivers of Alipurduar District; (a) Bangri River near Hantapara, (b) Sukhti River near Makrapara, (c) Raidak-II River near Newlands TG, (d) Gargenda River near Lankapara SSB camp, (e) Raidak-II River near Dhantali, (f) Kaljani River near Alipurduar, (g) Torsa River near Simlabari, (h) Mujnai River near Harinathpur. 221
- 6.17 Identification of river valley enlargement in different rivers of Alipurduar District; (a) & (b) Pana River near Radharani TG, (c) & (d) Pagli River near Dalmore, (e) & (f) Sukhti River near Gerochera, (g) & (h) Rethi River near Chawmurchi, (i) & (j) Titi River near Lankapara. 223
- 6.18 Identification of river valley enlargement in different rivers of Alipurduar District; (k) & (l) Jayanti River, (m) & (n) Raidak-II River near Newlands TG, (o) & (p) Hauri River near Totopara, (q) & (r) Torsa River near Hasimara, (s) & (t) Titi River near Hantapara. 224
- 7.1 Flash flood carried debris stuck to the roots of trees and helped to reduce the impact of flash flood, (a) & (b) Titi forest near Totopara, (c) & (d) Buxa forest near Jayanti, (e) Rethi forest near Garochera, (f) Madhu forest near Satali. 241
- 7.2 Human interference on river, (a) permanent settlement on flood protection embankment of Dima River near Alipurduar town, (b) administrative officials investigating illegal extraction of river bed materials on Dimdima River near Ethilbari (Source: Uttarbanga Sambad). 244
- 7.3 Use of local available materials to reduce the impacts of flash flood in Alipurduar District, (a) use of gravel to protect Howri River bank near Totopara, (b) use of stone and sand to protect Makrapara hat, (c) use of stone and sand to protect Dhumchi tea garden, (d) use of bamboo to protect Raidak-II River bank near Kumargram. 245

- 7.4 Flood protection embankment in different rivers in Alipurduar District, (a) Howri River near Totopara, (b) Jayanti River at Jayanti, (c) Purnikhola River near Ballalguri, (d) Mujnai River near Rangalibazna, (e) Nonai River near Rajabhatkhawa, (f) Sukthi River near Garochera. 246
- 7.5 Flash flood protection wall along different roads of Alipurduar District, (a) & (b) road protection wall along Hantapara-Totopara road near Ballalguri, (c) road protection wall near Jamtala of Uttar Madarihat, (d) protection wall along Chuapara-Central Duars road near Radharani tea garden. 248
- 7.6 Flood protection embankment in different Rivers of Alipurduar District, (a) Torsa River near Kathalbari, (b) Basra River near Hamiltonganj, (c) Raidak-II River near Barobisa, (d) Raidak-II River near Joydebpur. 249
- 7.7 (a) artificial channel shapping to divert Mujnai River water flow near Deagaon in Falakata block, (b) long spur constructed to divert Ridak-II River water flow near Newlands tea garden. 250
- 7.8 Weather stations in Alipurduar District, (a) CWC hydrological and meteorological station near Hasimara, (b) hydrological and meteorological station of Irrigation & Waterways Department at Alipurduar, (c) agricultural seed farm weather station of Kumargram block, (d) agricultural seed farm weather station of Kumargram block. 257
- 7.9 Flood warning systems in Alipurduar District, (a) historical river gauge level board with different flood warning levels by Alipurduar divisional Irrigation & Waterways office, (b) river water level warning board at Alipurduar District disaster management office, (c) water level warning marks by CWC on Raidak-II River near Barobisa, (d) water level marks at Mujnai River near Bhutnirghat. 260
- 7.10 (a) flood protection spur in a small tributary of Mujnai River near Rangalibazna; (b) embankment protection work is progressing near Alipurduar town; (c) flood protection spur on Jayanti River at Jayanti; (d) flood protection guard on Mujnai River near Sishubari. 262
- 7.11 Permeant flood shelters in Alipurduar District, (a) at Silbarihat of Alipurduar-I block, (b) at Mendabari of Kalchini block. 266

### **List of Abbreviations**

BDO	Block Development officer
BIS	Bureau of Indian Standards
CWC	Central Water Commission
DBITA	Dooars Branch Indian Tea Association
DDMP	District Disaster Management Plan
EC	Electrical Conductivity
FFMI	Flash Flood Magnitude Index
GIS	Geographic Information System
ICAR	Indian Council of Agricultural Research
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross
IHDB	Integrated Hydrological Data Book
IMD	Indian Meteorological Department
IRS	Indian Remote Sensing Satellite
ITPA	Indian Tea Planters Associations
LISS	Linear Imaging Self Scanning
LULC	Land Use Land Cover
MSL	Mean Sea Level
NBFCC	North Bengal Flood Control Commission
NDVI	Normalized Difference Vegetation Index
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OLI	Operational Land Imager
PWD	Public Works Department
RADAP	Rader Digitizer and Processor
RI	Recurrence Interval
SOI	Survey of India
SSB	Sashastra Seema Bal
TA	Total Alkalinity
TDS	Total Dissolved Solids
TG	Tea Garden
TH	Total Hardness
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USGS	United States Geological Survey
USNWS	United Nations National Weather Service
WAWQI	Weighted Arithmetic Water Quality Index
WHO	World Health Organisation
WMO	World Meteorological Organisation
WQI	Water Quality Index

## LIST OF APPENDICES

	<b>Page No.</b>
<b>Appendix A</b>	
List of Publications	283
<b>Appendix B</b>	
Questionnaire for field survey	284-288
<b>Appendix C</b>	
<b>Table 6.1</b> Water Quality Index Values of selected rivers of Alipurduar District during Pre-Monsoon period in 2017	289-290
<b>Table 6.2</b> Water Quality Index Values of selected rivers of Alipurduar District during Monsoon period in 2017	291-292
<b>Table 6.3</b> Water Quality Index Values of selected rivers of Alipurduar District during Pre-Monsoon period in 2019	293-294
<b>Table 6.4</b> Water Quality Index Values of selected rivers of Alipurduar District during Monsoon period in 2019	295-296