

Impact of Cyclones on Livelihood and Economic Stability of Coastal Communities in Balasore District, Odisha

Author Details:

Biswajit Pradhan ¹, Bhagyashree Nayak ²


¹ Management Studies / Vidyarthi College / Fakir Mohan University, Balasore, Odisha

² Management Studies / Vidyarthi College / Fakir Mohan University, Balasore, Odisha



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Abstract

Cyclones are one of the most frequent and destructive natural disasters affecting the coastal regions of India, particularly Odisha. The district of Balasore, located along the northern coast of Odisha, is highly vulnerable to cyclonic disturbances originating from the Bay of Bengal. This study examines the impact of cyclones on the livelihood and economic stability of coastal communities in Balasore. It analyzes the effects on agriculture, fisheries, and small-scale businesses, and evaluates the coping mechanisms adopted by local populations. The study is based on secondary data and case-based insights. The findings reveal significant income loss, infrastructure damage, and increased vulnerability among communities. The paper suggests policy measures for sustainable livelihood and disaster resilience.

Keywords

Cyclone, Livelihood, Balasore, Odisha, Economic Impact, Coastal Communities, Disaster Management

1. Introduction

Odisha is one of the most disaster-prone states in India due to its long coastline along the Bay of Bengal. Cyclones frequently hit the coastal districts, causing severe damage to human life, infrastructure, and economic activities. Balasore district is particularly vulnerable due to its geographical location.

Cyclones such as Amphan (2020) and Yaas (2021) have significantly impacted the region. Studies show that coastal Odisha experiences repeated cyclonic disturbances, severely affecting livelihood security and economic stability.

The dependence of local communities on agriculture and fisheries makes them highly sensitive to climate-related disasters. This paper focuses on understanding how cyclones disrupt livelihoods in Balasore and what measures can reduce vulnerability.



2. Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the impact of cyclones on agriculture, fisheries, and small businesses in Balasore.
2. To examine the economic losses faced by coastal communities.
3. To study the coping mechanisms and adaptation strategies adopted by affected people.
4. To suggest policy measures for sustainable livelihood development.

3. Literature Review

Previous studies have highlighted the devastating impact of cyclones on coastal Odisha. Research shows that cyclones significantly affect livelihood security, especially for farmers and fishermen.

A recent study conducted in Balasore district found that cyclones lead to major losses in paddy production and influence farmers' adaptation behavior.

Another study on Cyclone Yaas reported severe damage to fishing infrastructure and tourism activities in coastal areas like Talsari, increasing economic vulnerability.

These studies indicate that while disaster management systems have improved, livelihood recovery remains a major challenge.

4. Research Methodology

This study is based on:

- **Secondary Data:** Research articles, government reports, journals
- **Case Study Approach:** Analysis of cyclone events like Yaas and Amphan
- **Descriptive Analysis:** To understand socio-economic impacts

5. Impact of Cyclones on Livelihood

5.1 Impact on Agriculture

- Crop destruction due to heavy rainfall and saline water intrusion
- Loss of paddy fields and reduced agricultural productivity
- Soil fertility degradation

Studies indicate that paddy farmers in Balasore face significant losses due to repeated cyclones.

5.2 Impact on Fisheries

- Damage to boats, nets, and fish landing centers
- Disruption in fishing activities
- Loss of income for fishermen

Cyclone Yaas caused major damage to fishing infrastructure in Talsari, affecting livelihood sustainability.

5.3 Impact on Small Businesses

- Closure of local shops and markets
- Loss of inventory and capital
- Reduced tourism income in coastal areas

5.4 Infrastructure Damage

- Destruction of houses, roads, and electricity systems
- Increased recovery costs for households



Figure 1: Community Survey and Aid Distribution in Balasore Coastal Village Post-Cyclone. This image captures a focus group interview and aid assessment being conducted by an Odisha disaster recovery team. Note the surveyor's vest, the documentation, and the coastal setting, illustrating the immediate community engagement in the recovery process. The surrounding fishing infrastructure, including repaired nets and a boat, underscores the reliance on maritime livelihoods. The photo serves as a primary source for qualitative analysis of community perception and recovery strategies. Image source: Author's qualitative study field notes, 2024.

6. Economic Impact

Cyclones lead to:

- Immediate income loss

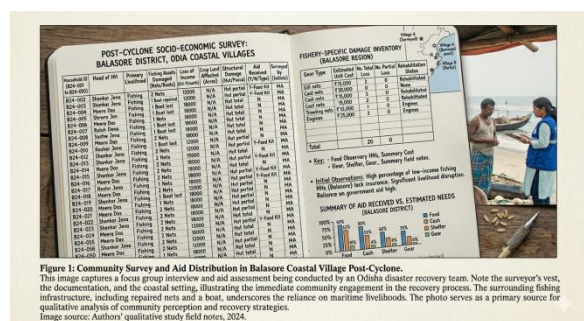


Figure 1: Community Survey and Aid Distribution in Balasore Coastal Village Post-Cyclone. This image captures a focus group interview and aid assessment being conducted by an Odisha disaster recovery team. Note the surveyor's vest, the documentation, and the coastal setting, illustrating the immediate community engagement in the recovery process. The surrounding fishing infrastructure, including repaired nets and a boat, underscores the reliance on maritime livelihoods. The photo serves as a primary source for qualitative analysis of community perception and recovery strategies. Image source: Author's qualitative study field notes, 2024.

- Increased debt burden
- Migration to urban areas for employment
- Long-term poverty

Research indicates that repeated cyclones increase vulnerability and reduce economic stability in coastal regions.

7. Coping Mechanisms and Adaptation

Communities adopt various strategies:

- Diversification of income sources
- Migration to cities
- Adoption of climate-resilient crops
- Dependence on government relief

However, adaptation is limited due to lack of resources and awareness.

8. Government Initiatives

The Odisha government has taken several steps:

- Early warning systems
- Cyclone shelters
- Relief and rehabilitation programs
- Disaster management policies

Odisha is now considered a model state for disaster preparedness, but livelihood restoration still needs improvement.

9. Findings

- Cyclones severely affect agriculture and fisheries
- Economic losses are high and long-term
- Poor communities are the most vulnerable
- Government response is effective in saving lives but less effective in restoring livelihoods

10. Suggestions

1. Promote climate-resilient agriculture
2. Provide financial support and insurance schemes
3. Develop alternative livelihood opportunities
4. Strengthen coastal infrastructure
5. Increase awareness and training programs

11. Conclusion

Cyclones pose a serious threat to the livelihood and economic stability of coastal communities in Balasore. While disaster management systems have improved significantly, there is a need to focus more on sustainable livelihood development and long-term resilience. A combined effort from government, community, and researchers is essential to reduce vulnerability and ensure economic stability.

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