



Green Construction Research & Training Center (GCRTC) Seminar Series

Hydrocide in South Asia's Lifeline: The GBM Basin Crisis of Water, Power and Survival

Bayes Ahmed, PhD

Associate Professor

Department of Risk and Disaster Reduction
University College London (UCL), UK

Date: Tuesday, 22 July 2025

Time: 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM - PDT

Location: EME 4218, School of Engineering, UBC, Okanagan, Kelowna BC

ABSTRACT

Water is not simply a resource, it is deeply embedded in the cultural identity, dignity, and survival of communities. In the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna (GBM) basin, one of the world's most complex transboundary river systems, deliberate manipulation of water flows has created an escalating crisis. This presentation introduces the concept of Hydrocide, the systemic mismanagement, diversion, or weaponization of water, as a novel framework for analyzing these dynamics. Hydrocide extends beyond environmental degradation, highlighting how water control becomes a powerful tool of oppression that undermines livelihoods, destabilizes ecosystems, and violates basic human rights.

Through upstream construction of dams, barrages, diversions, and water infrastructure, often with limited or no consultation with downstream communities, millions in Bangladesh face chronic water scarcity during the dry season and destructive floods during the monsoon. This not only threatens food security and public health but actively displaces populations, fuels socio-economic marginalization, and fosters long-term ecological collapse. These practices directly violate the human right to water as recognized by the United Nations, while also breaching upon broader rights to food, health, and security outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Hydrocide framework situates these conflicts within global (dis)order dynamics, exposing how national interests override transboundary justice, and how sovereignty claims are used to justify exploitation of shared resources. The study calls for inclusive, rights-based water governance, recognizing water not just as a technical or political issue, but as a fundamental pillar of environmental justice, human dignity, and regional peace.

BIOGRAPHY



Dr Bayes Ahmed holds the position of Associate Professor in the Department of Risk and Disaster Reduction (RDR) at University College London (UCL). His research experience spans across disaster risk reduction (DRR), conflict and migration, climate change adaptation, genocide diplomacy, Hydrocide, and climate mobility. Bayes specialises in the intersection of conflict and disaster, with a vision to improve the quality of life of displaced persons and stateless populations. He is driven by a passion for collaborating with frontline communities, aiming to understand their challenges comprehensively and develop actionable policy recommendations to meet their specific needs. He holds a PhD in disaster risk reduction from UCL; a joint Master of Science degree in Geospatial Technologies from universities in Spain, Germany, and Portugal; and a Bachelor of Urban and Regional Planning degree from the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET).