

Flooding in West Bengal caused by Tropical Cyclone Aila has left thousands of children without food, water or shelter

Recent flooding in Southern West Bengal due to the tropical cyclone Aila has left 125 people dead and over 5.4 million people displaced. Thousands of children have been affected with little access to food, clean water, healthcare or sanitation facilities.

According to Government of West Bengal estimates, 25,000 villages in 16 districts were immediately inundated when the embankments breached allowing salt water to flood the area. This situation has left **hundreds of thousands of children at risk of becoming malnourished** – thousands of families are struggling to survive on handfuls of salt water and rice. **Access to clean drinking water is also extremely scarce** as ground water sources have been contaminated by salt water. Medical supplies are in very short supply, leaving children **unable to access life-saving care** as water borne and respiratory diseases are on the rise.

People have lost everything they own. The flooding has left 750,000 houses severely damaged or destroyed - as a result, families are crowding in temporary shelters, such as schools and mosques.

The saltwater intrusion has destroyed the paddy crop and rendered the land unusable for one or two years. The floods have washed away seeds stock, killed livestock, and wiped out all stocks of freshwater fish and shrimp. Most people were unable to save anything - food, animals, clothes, cooking materials, school books or other belongings – before their homes were inundated and, in many cases, destroyed. Local officials say that such a catastrophic disaster was never anticipated. With food, water, clothes and medical supplies in short supply, **children and their families are desperately in need of our help.** Save the Children is appealing for public support as it launches its relief operation to assist those in desperate need.



Farida's story

Farida is a 15 year old girl from Rajbati, a village in Sandeshkhali I

“My house was completely destroyed. There was water everywhere. We stayed in a relief camp the first two days. But there was no water to drink and it was stinking as there was no toilet. We moved out and are now living on the side of the road. I have no clean clothes to wear. I don't know what has happened to my friends. We went to the same learning centre in the village and I do not know where they are now.”

The Block Development Officer for Sandeshkhali 2 told Save the Children that in his block 180 square kilometres out of 195 is under water. He said that the area had never seen a disaster of this magnitude before.

The difference you could make

Save the Children is already present in the Sandeshkhali 1 and 2 blocks of North 24 Parganas district.

We are poised and ready to respond with essential supplies to reach out to 2000 families spread across 15 relief camps from 40 villages. With your support, we will:

- **Distribute 2000 hygiene kits** – each kit will last a family of 6 for 30 days and contains a range of supplies including soap, mosquito nets, sanitary napkins, chlorine tablets and oral rehydration salts. We will put these kits together in Kolkata and store them in our warehouse in Sandeshkhali 1, reaching over 12,000 beneficiaries.
- **Supply tarpaulins and bamboo** so families can build temporary shelters to protect themselves from the expected rains.
- **Clean groundwater sources and construct raised platforms for the tube wells** to ensure that when it floods again they will be well protected and will not get contaminated so communities can gather and store clean drinking water and protect children from contracting waterborne diseases.
- **Distribute clothes** - most people escaped to the relief camps with only the pair of soaked clothes they were wearing the day they fled from their villages eight days ago. Most people have worn the same clothes for more than a week.
- **Create child friendly spaces** at the relief camps where people are crowded so children can play, continue with temporary education and be kept safe. During emergency situations such as these, children are most vulnerable to being trafficked to large cities as cheap labour.

One villager said, “It will take several years for us to recover from these losses. My children have lost all the books that we bought them. I am not sure how they will be able to continue their education next year.”

The difference you could make to children’s lives

- INR 1200 is the cost of one hygiene kit
INR 24,00,000 could provide 2000 hygiene kits so that families stay clean and healthy
- INR 2000 is the cost of materials including such as rope, bamboo and tarpaulins for one temporary shelter
INR 40,00,000 could provide 2000 vulnerable families with essential shelter
- INR 12,000 is the cost to create a raised platform and surrounding walls to protect one tube well
INR 48,00,000 could ensure that 40 villages do not suffer from a water shortage due to contamination when it floods next
- INR 200 is the cost of a set of clothes
INR 12,00,000 could provide 6000 children with one set of clean clothes
- INR 15,000 is the cost of building one child friendly space
INR 22,50,000 could ensure 15 relief camps have a space where children can be safe

**With your support, we can provide life-saving support to children affected by the flooding in West Bengal.
Thank you for any support you can give.**



Save the Children has been working in 42 villages in Sandeshkhali blocks I & II, the worst-affected blocks in the district of North 24 Parganas, for five years, running an innovative and highly successful anti-child trafficking project. Unfortunately none of these centres can be currently located and are assumed to have been washed away like thousands of other houses in these villages.

Many of these children have now lost their homes and possessions. Their families have lost all means of creating a livelihood and the training centres that we had set up have been destroyed. There is a grave risk that these children will once again be forced into work or trafficked as their families take desperate measures in order to survive.

These two blocks were the base of our success in terms of creating a replicable “community-based child protection mechanism”. Under this programme we had assisted more than 2000 children from all over India, some previously engaged in domestic work and others victims of trafficking to reintegrate with their families and to resume formal education or start vocational training. Our team met many of these children on the morning of the cyclone for a training session. By evening, many of these children had been separated from their families and had lost everything. Many children have gone missing.

Save the Children is the largest independent agency on the ground that responds to emergencies with a focus on children. We have been working in India for over 60 years and currently have programmes in 12 states focusing on child protection, quality inclusive education, child survival and child centred disaster risk reduction.

To learn more about the work that we do in India, please visit www.savethechildren.in