

Friday 18 August

Deadly flood waters keep rising in Bangladesh and India, as Nepal begins to count cost of devastation

Almost 10 million people are affected by flooding that's inundated large swathes of Bangladesh, Nepal and India following weeks of heavy monsoon rains.

The humanitarian situation in Bangladesh deteriorated quickly this week after six days of relentless rain caused the Ganges, Meghna and Brahmaputra river basins to rise rapidly, spilling over and submerging much of the north and northeastern parts of the country.

The flooding has left 2.2 million people in northern Bangladesh homeless, including at least 600,000 children while 37 people have died, according to the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief. Hundreds of schools have closed across 20 districts, while roads have been washed out and 370,000 hectares of crops badly damaged.

"Last year's floods hit Bangladesh pretty hard, however it looks as though this year's are already significantly worse from a humanitarian point of view," Save the Children Country Director in Bangladesh, Mark Pierce said.

"The immediate situation is extremely desperate as affected families search for shelter, food, water and other basic necessities. The sheer volume of water is also making it really difficult to access some of the communities most in need, which is one of our greatest challenges right now.

"Once the flood waters recede we know that longer-term support will be critical to help communities fully recover, including getting schools re-opened so children can get back to the safety and routine of the class room, and supporting farmers to get back on their feet."

Meanwhile in northeast India, monsoon rains have intensified, triggering a fresh wave of flooding in Assam, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar states.

"Though we come to expect these rains every year, this year is particularly severe. One river in Bihar state hadn't seen rain for decades and was suddenly inundated with about half a meter of rainfall," Save the Children India Humanitarian Operations Manager Murali Kunduru said.

"Just as we did during last year's floods, Save the Children teams are working around the clock to support those families who've been worst affected."

In Nepal, most flood waters have started to recede however this has increased the risk of a secondary emergency.

Save the Children is warning that dirty stagnant waters left behind by the floods, when combined with poor access to hygiene items and lots of people living in cramped evacuation centres, could increase the risk of an outbreak of disease.

“Right now hygiene is critically important to prevent an outbreak of waterborne illnesses and diseases like diarrhea, which can occur after flooding when there are large numbers of displaced families living in cramped, crowded conditions,” Save the Children’s Country Directory in Nepal Delailah Borja said.

“It’s really important that we prevent this from happening. It’s the last thing needed by children and families who’ve already been through so much.”

Across the three countries almost 10 million people have been affected by flooding, including nearly 7 million in India, 2.2 million in Bangladesh and about 500,000 in Nepal. The combined death toll is more than 300.

Save the Children is responding to the floods in all three countries, distributing hundreds of tarpaulins for temporary shelter in Nepal and running special playgroups for children in India to help them recover, as well as distributing hygiene items and temporary shelter materials.

The aid agency is also preparing to distribute relief items including hygiene kits, kitchen kits and cash for basic necessities like food and water to families in Kurigram and Sirajganj, the two worst affected districts of Bangladesh.

ENDS

To arrange media interviews, please contact:

Bangladesh: Md Quayyum Abdul, +880 171 502 5551

Nepal: Sudarshan Shrestha, +977 985 100 4575

India: Devendra Tak, + 91 981 116 8488 or d.tak@savethechildren.in

Regional level: Evan Schuurman, +66 989 725 908 or
evan.schuurman@savethechildren.org

Janelle Coradine

Save the Children New Zealand Communications Director

janelle.coradine@scnz.org.nz

+ 021 051 2967