



Christian Conference of Asia

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Appeal for Prayers and Solidarity with those affected by Cyclone Amphan

The Bay of Bengal region in South Asia experienced a catastrophic natural disaster, Cyclone Amphan, which ravaged many cities and districts along the east coast of India, particularly the states of West Bengal and Odisha, and the Sunderban delta region in Bangladesh. The powerful cyclone, which has been the worst experienced in decades, has killed 84 people so far while several thousands have been displaced. Infrastructure and property worth millions along with irreplaceable and invaluable natural resources have been destroyed. Cyclone Amphan has left a trail of destruction in its wake.

The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) offers condolences to the bereaved families and expresses solidarity with all people and communities who have experienced extensive damage to lives and livelihoods. The CCA urges all its member churches, as well as churches and ecumenical organisations around the world to uphold those affected in prayers, express solidarity, and respond urgently to this humanitarian crisis.

The regions have also suffered devastating impacts due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The lockdown situations imposed in the region greatly affected the evacuation measures. Though the region has mechanisms in place to respond to such disasters (as the climate in the region is prone to frequent cyclones), the state's resources were stretched and diverted towards relief for COVID-19, thus making disaster management and response an even greater challenge than usual. Quarantine facilities were hastily turned into relief and evacuation centres. Social distancing norms currently in place have meant that mass evacuations have been even more challenging, with the full capacity of shelters being underutilised. The cyclone has greatly exacerbated the plight of 58 million people living in the region who are some of the most vulnerable communities in South Asia: poor fishing communities in the Sunderbans and over a million Rohingya refugees living in crowded camps in Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh.

Rehabilitation concerns are serious and cannot be underestimated. The devastation has been termed a 'bigger disaster than COVID-19'. The rising of sea levels can send water barrelling inland, decimating communities and villages. Flooding of several hundreds of square kilometres of low-lying areas by the highly saline sea water has rendered tracts of land infertile, making economic recovery an even greater challenge. Relief operations are hampered since the level of impact has not been fully assessed, but it is clear that widespread destruction has occurred. The cyclonic devastation of the region is causing untold miseries to millions of people who have already been grappling with the health crisis and economic slowdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The recovery phase and rebuilding efforts must combine disaster risk reduction, enhanced public health infrastructure, and adaptation to climate change.

Our thoughts and prayers are with all the people in the affected areas who suffering from the devastating cyclone Amphan, especially through tragic loss of life and the immense material devastation. On behalf of the CCA, I urge all member churches and councils of CCA to pray for the victims and their families, and extend support to all who are engaged in the much-needed work of relief, recovery, and rebuilding.

Mathews George Chunakara
General Secretary, CCA
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