

Super Cyclone Amphan–Compounding Crises

The *Super Cyclonic Storm Amphan* recently wreaked havoc in parts of Eastern India and Bangladesh. Making landfall in West Bengal on the 20th of May, the cyclone displaced millions into relief shelters, destroyed livelihoods, and depleted natural resources. Causing over [US\\$13 billion worth of damage](#), Amphan also ranks as the costliest cyclone ever recorded in the North Indian Ocean, surpassing the record previously held by Cyclone Nargis of 2008.

This category-5 tropical cyclone is one of the first cyclones of the current North Indian Ocean cyclone season. Originating in a low-pressure region existing around 300km to the east of the coast of Colombo, Sri Lanka, the storm intensified rapidly as it got classified as a tropical depression on 15th of May by the Indian Meteorological Department and the Joint Typhoon Warning Centre. The situation worsened further, as it was later classified as a severe cyclonic storm within the next 12 hours. The state of West Bengal was the most affected as the winds took a north-eastern trajectory after originating down south. The rescue authorities had evacuated at least 2.5 million people before the cyclone made landfall. Soon, roads all over the state had been flooded, furthermore, around [14 million people were without electricity](#). Regions in Odisha and West Bengal, including the pristine Sunderbans, bore the brunt of the winds gusting up to 185km/h. The cyclone is suspected to have claimed at least [86 lives in West Bengal](#), while Bangladesh has sustained 12 deaths due to the cyclone.



*Most of those who died were hit by fallen trees or debris.
(Source: Reuters)*

This severe storm has struck at a time when a significant chunk of the population is staring at starvation and reverse migration due to the coronavirus lockdown. Unlike in 2009, when Cyclone Aila struck the state, people do not have the option of migrating to other cities in search of livelihood in the near future. Entire areas were cut off from the rest of the country as network issues persisted. Apart from the impact on infrastructure, the inundation of land by salt-water will be a hurdle that farmers in the area will have to deal with this cropping season. Trees being uprooted, swamped farmlands, dead livestock, and the present economic crunch will be a nasty blow to the working class, and it might even take months to recover from this calamity. Forest officials monitoring the Sunderbans delta stated that the impact on wildlife, albeit unknown, will be most acute.

Twenty-six teams from the NDRF and five columns of the Indian Army, each consisting of thirty-five men, are carrying out the evacuation and rescue work in the disaster-hit regions. Setting up of relief camps proved to be a strenuous task as social distancing norms had to be followed. Officials have

reportedly identified 7,092 centres suitable to accommodate more than one lakh of the rescued people since other government structures were being used as isolation centres for coronavirus. Keeping in mind the new regulations, relief shelters which earlier housed 3,000 people now host 750 people, thus complying with the distancing protocols.



The situation in West Bengal post-Amphan. (Source: [Goonj](#))

With the country already reeling from a socio-economic crisis, a calamity at such testing times seems most unfortunate. The Good Samaritans of the nation, however, have stepped up once again to help those in need. While the Prime Minister has already promised [a sum of 1,500 crores](#) for the relief and rehabilitation of the affected states of West Bengal and Odisha, along with the promise of continued support following an aerial survey, many organisations have taken it upon

themselves to gather funds and resources for those in need. While some are non-profit organisations and associations, others are corporates backed by a strong sense of social responsibility. The links listed below can be utilised by anyone wishing to lend a helping hand during these difficult times.

- [Prime Minister's National Relief Fund \(PMNRF\)](#)—accepts voluntary contributions from Individuals, Organizations, Trusts, Companies and Institutions etc. for relief of disaster victims.
- [Rahat Amphan, Goonj](#)—In tandem with their Rahat COVID19 initiative, they accept monetary and material contributions at their offices for relief and rehabilitation of the victims.
- [UNICEF Relief Fund](#)—UNICEF is working together with the government and partners as part of the West Bengal Inter-Agency Group to support children and families affected by the cyclone.
- [Association for India's Development \(AID\)](#)—A non-profit organisation accepting international payments for COVID19 and Amphan relief.
- [Times Network Relief Initiative](#)—Times Network launched an initiative to gather funds to help the states tackle the aftermath of the cyclone under the banner, 'India for Bengal.'
- [ActionAID Association](#)—An affiliate of ActionAID International, the association has been working with poor and marginalised people in India since 1972. The association is helping gather funds and resources for those affected by the cyclone.
- [West Bengal State Emergency Relief Fund](#)—State government's fund to tackle the ongoing COVID19 and Amphan crises.

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