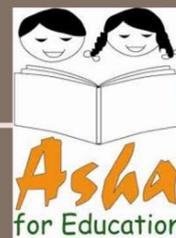


SUPPORTING YAAS IMPACTED CHILDREN



Future of children are once again at higher risk. The landfall of Cyclone Yaas on 26th May 2021 has again shattered their dreams.



Background & Justification

Sundarbans is located in the remote southern part of deltaic West Bengal, India which is inhabited by over 4 million people. Livelihood has always been very challenging for the residents who have been mostly dependent on farming, fishing, honey collection etc which have been barely sufficient to meet their basic needs. Since the last few years, their sufferings have worsened drastically because of the reoccurrence of natural calamities with an alarming regularity. The area had already witnessed cyclone Aila in 2009 and since then suffered minor and major cyclones like Cyclone Fani and Bulbul in 2019, Cyclone Amphan in 2020 and now Cyclone Yaas in 2021.

Finding a suitable word to describe the multidimensional crippling impact of Cyclone Yaas would perhaps be a futile exercise. **The inhabitants of Sundarbans were severely affected by the Amphan cyclone and continue to be affected by Covid 19 pandemic. Adding insult to injury, on 26th May Cyclone Yaas passed over 40 villages of Sundarbans and wreaked havoc on the residents. Over 90% of the farmers lost their agricultural land** and livelihood to these devastating **130km/h** wind and torrential rainfall. The timing of the cyclone coincided with high tide resulting in inundation of large tracts of agricultural land by saline water. In addition to destruction of property, this posed an immediate threat in the form of unavailability of potable water for the residents and their livestock. The danger of water borne diseases looms large. The flooding is reported to be even larger this time than what had happened during Amphan. This has a more ominous and far -reaching consequence - while the water will, and has already started to recede, the saline deposits would render the lands unsuitable for agricultural use for next several years. And while the cyclone was raging through these lands, a major portion of the residents were forced to be temporarily relocated to shelters where safe distancing could not be maintained. Hence, in the near future, it may not be surprising if this triggers a localized - much dreaded third covid wave in this region which is already reeling under the second wave.

Need Assessment

The reoccurrence of cyclones has completely devastated the life of the locals at Sundarbans. This time the cyclone caused more damage than the Amphan as the water flooded the agricultural land for more than 6 days. It was observed that, whenever there is a high tide, these areas run the risk of being inundated again. Villagers walking through waist deep water to receive relief material from MUKTI volunteers has been a commonplace sight. Embankments have been breached in several places and hundreds have lost their homes overnight leaving almost nothing to survive on. Alongside other valuables, study materials for students, stored rations were either washed away with the floods or damaged by it.

Assessment & Rationale

- The reoccurrence of cyclones has forced students to drop their studies and help the family in farms and other household work.
- In cyclone Yaas, thousands of Madhyamik and Higher Secondary (HS) examinees and other students in these areas have lost their educational materials.
- Some of the students were managed to get some books along with them, but the condition of books is so bad that it is hardly possible to turn those stiff pages around. The text written on the books has vanished.

- Due to pandemic, the jobless parents cannot be able to afford the educational material for their children.
- The government provides textbooks in some of the area once in a year, but they do not take care of the special need of the student.
- Students mostly uses questions and answer type of books which is not supported by the Govt.
- It is feared by many that this crisis may force several students to drop out from formal education.
- In a grossly financially challenged populace, school dropout has been a common trend once teen age is reached - an age where one is perceived to be sufficiently able-bodied to help their parents with farming, fishing etc.

Proposed Solution

Reversing this trend has been one of the key missions of the MUKTI educational program through its MUKTI Support Schools (MSS). At present, MSS has a total student strength close to 2000. Many students of MSS are first generation learners.

Providing a suitable environment for the students to continue their studies has been the most important objective of the MSS program. Unfortunately, many of these children are now being forced to think of dropping out from formal education to help their family to sustain themselves.

Quoting one of the senior MUKTI field coordinators engaged in assessment of the ground situation, “the stench of decomposed leaves, tree branches, rotten carcasses, bad as it is in sweet water, is unbearably magnified in saline water.

Restoring hygiene to a minimum bearable threshold has to be the priority in many places, only then rebuilding followed by rehabilitation can slowly happen”. It is thus obvious that, **under these circumstances, retaining the students in schools calls for a holistic support which is not limited to mere distribution of study materials.**

To cater to the immediate needs of our students at MSS, we need funds to procure Books and associated study materials.

Our 2000 children are badly impacted by the cyclone. These economic challenges children, cannot afford basic covid sanitary materials like Mask.

Long Term Strategy

The COVID-19 lockdown has already affected education scenario in the region, so Mukti with our MSS initiative wants to provide help to children by providing them books and stationary support which is the need of the hour. This will develop reading habit among students and will boost their confidence that MUKTI and ASHA for Education is there to support their big dreams.

CYCLONE LEAVES VILLAGES & DREAMS SHATTERED

Books & homes lost, pupils worry about board exams

Tamagna Banerjee & Monotosh Chakraborty

Kolkata: Yaas-ravaged Sunderbans is desperate for basics such as food, water and shelter, but thousands of Madhyamik and higher secondary (HS) examinees on the shrinking islands have another worry as they have lost textbooks and study materials weeks ahead of exams. Educators fear the crisis may force several students to drop out of formal education.

Molna Gayen (16), of Heramba Gopalpur village in Patharpratima, was helping her parents and three siblings pack essentials before heading to a flood shelter when the river gushed in breaching the embankment next to their house. "We had to leave in a hurry; my books were left behind. I have no clue how I will prepare for Madhyamik now," she said.

A day after the cyclone, the Bengal government announced that Madhyamik and HS



Molna Gayen and Hasan Molla are among several Sunderbans board examinees who have lost their books

exams will be conducted in August second week and July last week respectively

Moumita Naskar, of Amratala village in Basant, used to dream of a government job. With all her books gone and home badly damaged, she is thinking of dropping out and help her family tide over the crisis. "Covid has already paralysed us as my father, a mason, has been out of job for months. Now the cyclone has shaken us so badly. I don't know if I can continue my studies," said Moumita.

Madhyamik examinee Hasan Molla, of Dumki village in the Sunderbans, said he could salvage books and some study materials but with his mud home badly damaged, he has nowhere to study. "Studying seems to be a luxury now," he told TOI.

Anindya Dasgupta, a senior volunteer at a chain of support schools run by NGO Mukti, said: "Our primary responsibility is to provide a suitable environment for them to continue studies."

According to government estimates, 15,000-odd Madhyamik and HS students are to take exams from cyclone-hit areas such as Patharpratima, Namkhana, Kakdwip and Gosaba in the Sunderbans. Admitting the crisis, state officials said they had started a survey across villages to find out the number of affected students. "We will provide books to examinees as well as places with electric connection where they can study," said Gosaba BDO Saurabh Mitra.





Budget

S.No.	Item	Number Of Children	Per unit cost	Total
1	Books & Stationary Support	1500	450	675000
2	Mask	1500 -1800	15	25000
	Total Cost student support			700000