

‘Super Cyclone’ Slams South Asia, Christian Ministry Rushes to Help

One of America’s biggest mission agencies was gearing up today to respond to a “super cyclone” in South Asia—a region also battling a coronavirus surge that’s created a health and hunger crisis.

Cyclone Amphan—a Category 2 hurricane-strength storm with winds over 100 miles per hour—slammed into the densely populated Bay of Bengal delta region with devastating force on Wednesday, causing widespread fear and storm surges up to 17 feet.

“The severity of the cyclone and rains is unimaginable,” said a church leader working alongside Texas-based mission agency Gospel for Asia (GFA World, g). “All our networks seem to have stopped.”

Another church leader in hard-hit West Bengal, India, said a river embankment had collapsed and the locals—mostly fishermen and their families—were fleeing for their lives and taking refuge in schools.

“Coronavirus has already paralyzed the region, and this disaster just makes the whole situation worse,” said GFA founder Dr. K.P. Yohannan. “These are megadisasters rolling into one—and the result could be catastrophic.”

GFA is preparing to deploy its ‘Servant Boat’ team to the Sundarbans—a cluster of dozens of islands in the cyclone’s direct path, where 4.5 million villagers live in mud houses amid extreme poverty. The islands straddle the border of India and Bangladesh.

The team, which has been stockpiling vital supplies, is on standby to rescue stranded villagers, provide spiritual support to suffering families and deliver aid, working with local governments to coordinate relief.

In 1991, a super cyclone killed more than 130,000 in Bangladesh.

Cyclone Amphan comes as India and Bangladesh reported a spike in new coronavirus cases after lockdown rules were relaxed. India, with more than 100,000 cases, is now seeing more than 4,000 new cases every day. Bangladesh has also reported a sharp rise.

7 Million Evacuated

By Tuesday, 7 million people had been evacuated from the monster cyclone's path—but thousands of families living in makeshift homes are still in the danger zone, as storm surges threaten to bring rapid-rising floods.

"Can you imagine mothers carrying their tiny babies, climbing trees as high as they can climb... to take those little babies and tie them up on the top of the trees?" Yohannan said in a video message. "All these mothers want is to somehow save their children."

People in the region are "praying desperately together" as GFA workers serve as frontline responders. GFA has launched a website to track cyclone relief efforts at

"God is able to tell even the winds and the waves to be still," said Yohannan, whose faith-based organization helps the poorest of the poor, including children, families and widows on one of the islands known as Widows Island.