

A preliminary report on COVID and Amphan Relief Distribution by DISHA in the coastal areas and Sundarbans

DISHA was distributing COVID relief support when Amphan struck. Thereafter, the support for victims of COVID lockdown merged with Amphan relief.

DISHA's relief efforts—particularly in the North and South 24 Parganas (including the Sundarbans blocks), Purba Medinipur, and Howrah—have received support from groups and individuals all over, and we take this opportunity to present a few glimpses of the relief activities. We shall present a fuller narrative later.

Pictures: We have been more busy distributing relief than in taking photos and have had even less time to put together the photos that have been shot. We look forward to uploading relevant and meaningful pictures in larger numbers in the near future.

In the south west delta

The cyclone Amphan made its landfall at Sagar Island and gradually travelled northwards. Thus, areas in the Western delta, including the western Sundarbans blocks of Sagar, Namkhana, Kakdwip, and the Kulpi block in South 24 Parganas, were some of the hardest hit in terms of direct storm damage—devastation of the landscape, with destruction of hundreds of thousands of dwellings.

Two immediate necessities were shelter-material and, often, food. The DISHA teams in the western Sundarbans, in collaboration with the Dakshinbanga Matsyajibi Forum (DMF), sprung into action the very next day. Thereafter, substantial numbers of tarpaulin and food items have been distributed. Since dwellings remain in shambles in various places and shelter materials are scarce or unaffordable, DISHA will continue to

distribute tarpaulins. Where necessary, food, medicines, and water purifying chemicals will also be distributed.



Distribution among families of migrant workers in Kakkwip whose homes were destroyed by the cyclone

Tarpaulins and food distributed among 100 families from various villages of Kulpi in collaboration with the local organization of Fishworkers, the Tangrachar Samudrik Matsyajibi Samabay Samiti Ltd.





In the eastern Sundarbans

While DISHA activists have been trying to help the communities across the Sundarbans blocks since the beginning, getting across substantial amounts of relief material only became possible a few days after the storm hit. For, connectivity and communication had almost disappeared, and normal life was severely disrupted even in Kolkata.

On 28 May, DISHA and Dakshinbanga Matsyajibi Forum (DMF) jointly facilitated a relief initiative taken by the Rotaract Club of Central Calcutta and the Prameya Foundation. The initiative took the form of distributing relief packages to some 124 families from the fishing community in Bamunia Island (also called “Baunia”) and 20 families from Hatgachhi village. Bamunia is an island in the Bidyadhari River, an island that is

severely threatened with riverine erosion and perhaps ultimate submergence.

Some 125 families got the full relief package, which consisted of polythene 'tarpaulin' sheets (mostly of 170 gsm variety), rice, pulses, potatoes, onions, biscuit packets and masks. The rest received the package minus the tarpaulin. Additionally, about hundred packets of sanitary napkins were distributed. The site of the distribution of relief was Kanmari, adjacent to Hatgachhi village and on the other side of the river (Bidyadhari) from Bamunia. Additionally, some packages of dry food were left with the Panchayat office, for local distribution. The distribution was done with full cooperation from the local authorities.



DISHA's next visit to Bamunia was on 4 June. This time, the bulk of the relief was distributed at Bamunia Island.



In the next few days, DISHA, largely in collaboration with the DMF and various local organizations, will be taking relief to various points across Sundarbans blocks—to Minakhan, Gosaba, Sandeshkhali II, and Hingaljanj. Relief teams will also be visiting Hasnabad and Basirhat. We shall bring you more information shortly.

Relief work in Purba Medinipur and Howrah

The coastal tracts of the Purba Medinipur District have been hard hit. The areas nearest to the sea have experienced the most ravaging destruction. DISHA has been distributing relief in the Khejuri and Contai Blocks in Purba Medinipur Districts and in various parts of Howrah district. We shall come back to you with pictures and details soon.