



CYCLONE AMPHAN

WCT-aided relief
work in the fringe
villages of the
Sundarbans Tiger
Reserve in
collaboration with
SHER and the
Forest Department





On May 20, 2020, an extremely severe cyclone Amphan made a resounding landfall in the Sundarbans and other regions of West Bengal, Odisha and Andaman Islands. The Sundarbans is reeling from the ill-effects of the storm.



The devastating winds have destroyed homes; roads and embankments; freshwater ponds and tube wells and agricultural fields have been flooded with saline water. Dead livestock carcasses and rotting fishes, it is feared could cause water and vector borne disease outbreaks in the region.



Homes and livelihoods of millions of people in the Sundarbans are severely affected by the storm and inflow of saline sea water into agricultural lands and freshwater drinking sources. The never-ending wind, tides, and rains are further aggravating the situation.



The Kolkata-based wildlife organisation SHER and the staff of Sundarbans Tiger Reserve (STR), with support from Wildlife Conservation Trust (WCT) are on ground zero of the cyclone affected areas to carry out relief work.



WCT is financially supporting SHER, which is working in close coordination with the Forest Department to carry out relief work in the fringe villages of the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve. Large populations of people living in the Basirhat and Sajnekhali Wildlife Sanctuary Ranges have no access to clean water and food.



In the Phase I & II of the relief work, large high gauged tarpaulin sheets, drinking water, water containers, soap, first aid, emergency medicines, ORS sachets, vegetables and clothes were distributed among the affected people. The supplies have been distributed through the Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) and the operation is being supervised and guided by the frontline staff of the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve.



The Sundarbans Tiger Reserve has taken prompt action by initiating community kitchen in the worst-affected villages of Basirhat and Sajnekhali Wildlife Sanctuary ranges.



The Sundarbans Tiger Reserve authorities have been very proactive in trying to combat the disaster with all the provided resources. The tireless and organised efforts of the frontline forest staff towards the welfare of the affected villagers has been praiseworthy.



We urge other organisations and individuals to come forward and support the Field Director of the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve in carrying out relief work for the affected communities till these people can resume their livelihood activities.



Image: Anish Andheria



Cyclone Amphan managed to cause substantial damage to the offices and anti-poaching camps of the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve field staff. The nylon net fencing that runs across the forest-village interface to reduce interactions between people and tigers was damaged. Within three days of being hit, the forest staff fixed camp office embankments as well as repaired and restored the entire broken nylon net fencing. The only silver lining amidst this tragedy is that the mangrove forest was more or less unaffected by the storm, and acted as a shield and absorbed much of the shock.