

MILLIONS OF ASIANS EXPOSED TO BIG CLIMATE DISASTERS



Millions of people in Asia, the world's most disaster-prone region, face the threat of major climate-linked disasters and food crises because government policies fail to protect them, Oxfam warned on Thursday.

A year after Typhoon Haiyan wreaked havoc in the Philippines, the aid and development charity warned that governments needed to do more to prevent people losing their lives and homes to extreme weather.

Asia, with 4.3 billion people or 60 percent of the global population, has borne almost half the estimated economic cost of all disasters over the past 20 years, amounting to around \$53 billion annually, Oxfam said.

“Without greater investment in climate and disaster-resilient development and more effective assistance for those at risk, super-typhoon Haiyan-scale disasters could fast become the norm, not the exception,” Oxfam said in a report.

Scientists say climate change is causing more frequent and intense weather events, and warn current levels of greenhouse gas emissions will push global temperature up by more than 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), an internationally agreed limit.

“This will be a global disaster, to be borne disproportionately by Asia's growing population,” Oxfam said.

Asian states have started to adopt policies and programmes to reduce the risks of disasters and adapt to climate change impacts such as extreme weather and rising seas, Oxfam said.

But these are not being implemented on the ground, added the report, which reviewed policies in 14 countries but focused on Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines and Vietnam.

Oxfam urged the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to create a regional resource base to help member states carry out projects to adapt to climate impacts and manage risk.

WOMEN OVERLOOKED

The report identified 10 major challenges that governments face, ranging from under-investment to inadequate legislation, data and political leadership.

Policy makers in Asia are still focused on funding response efforts after disasters, despite evidence that investing to prevent them saves lives and economic losses, Oxfam said.

For example, in the Philippines, nearly half of domestic spending on climate change adaptation goes to help people rebuild and recover after crises, the report noted.

Typhoon Haiyan, the strongest storm on record to hit land, left nearly 7,000 people dead or missing, and forced about 4 million people from their homes after ripping across the Philippines last November, with recovery still underway.

Climate adaptation and disaster reduction efforts that are in progress do little to ensure gender equality, the report said.

In Bangladesh, early warning systems are not tailored to women's needs, leaving them dependent on men to receive alerts, it said.

And in Vietnam, women's involvement in local flood and storm control is limited to child care and food distribution.

Oxfam said discussions on climate policy tend to take place in more educated urban centres, while poor rural communities are uninformed.

Asia's senior politicians do not show leadership on climate change adaptation, and the ministries or departments tasked with the work often lack political clout, the report added.

Source : <http://chimalaya.org/2014/11/07/millions-of-asians-exposed-to-big-climate-disasters-oxfam/>