The government and NGOs, national and international, are working very hard to assist the survivors of Aila. But the fact that there is little awareness of how bad things are at the coast is hampering our ability to take some crucial decisions about the long-term effects of Aila.

And All the Boards Did Sink

The availability of dry, safe places is scarce in Koyra and non-existent in the interiors of Dacope. The river embankments have been damaged in some places and have completely collapsed in others, making it difficult to tell floodwater and river-water apart. In some places, you couldn't tell that a village, with people, homes, schools, rice-fields, crops, children and their games had ever existed there because the river has submerged everything.

We could just see the thatched roofs of sunken houses in some places, looking as though they were floating. Lone school buildings stood tall in the middle of the waters looking forlorn. Since the storm hit, all of the schools have been shut.

Waiting to be saved.



In Koyra upazilla Aila caused a flood that kept the entire area inundated for two days. Even weeks after the storm, about 60% of the upazilla area still remains water-logged in at least ankle-deep water during high tide. Most residents of the river-side Gazirpara, Maizerhait, Gabbunia and Shakbaria villages of Uttor Bedkashi Union, Koyra have lost their homes and belongings to Aila and are now living in make-shift houses on the scattered remains of the river embankment, the only dry highland available. Some are residing in cyclone shelters and the homes of other villagers whose houses are not water-logged. Large numbers have migrated outside of the region is search of shelter and food security.

Schools out

The children in the Aila-affected areas are suffering from diarrhoea and skin diseases brought on by their unhygienic living conditions and the salinity of the floodwater. Their playgrounds are submerged in water that is almost five feet high in some places.

They now spend their time on the remains of the embankment waiting for relief or at least a distraction from their struggles. They have not had the chance to be near books or pencils in at least ten days.

In Koyra, around 25,500 students are enrolled in 125 primary and community schools. 118 of these schools have been affected and 71 have been damaged. 7,100 students are enrolled in the 18 secondary schools that have been affected. 19 out of 22 madrasahs have been badly affected, as have been 3 colleges.

Almost 90% of the children have lost their reading materials and uniforms.

In Dacope, I spoke to Laboni, a traumatised 11 year old whose entire family had to hold on to a tree for over four hours when the embankment collapsed and the flood gushed in, destroying all the things that of were of any value to her.

"All my school material is gone. I have no clothes but the ones I am wearing she said with tears in her eyes. Did you bring anything for us?" another villager interjected as I spoke to Laboni. We're surrounded by so much water, but we can't drink any of it they echoed the ancient mariner.

Schools and colleges have been shut down because of flooding, and the ones that remain usable are being used as shelters for the homeless. In Dacope, schools are inaccessible as they remain submerged in water.

The Long-term Imperatives

Over 1700km of river embankment has been damaged. The saline water has contaminated most, if not all, fresh water sources available. Though de-watering of the contaminated sources is underway, a vast majority of