Aila...

A photofeature by
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WHEN Cyclone Aila struck southwestern Bangladesh in May 2009, it was a relatively mild storm given the country's history of natural catastrophes. But the storm has devastated the lives of hundreds of thousands and its aftermath will last for years.

Aila burst local embankments flooding hundreds of villages and leaving tens of thousands homeless. In Gabura, a tidal wave surged through the area destroying everything in its path. For days after the storm, dead bodies and drowned livestock floated through the villages as the survivors tried to salvage what was left of their homes.

The cyclone destroyed their livelihoods, damaging farmland, shrimp farms, and future harvests. Many have left for nearby cities like Jessore, Khulna and Satkhira. Those who have stayed behind are living in a refugee camp that has sprung up on the embankment surrounding Gabura. The devastation of the storm caught NGOs and government officials completely by surprise. The media, which gave extensive coverage of Cyclone Sidr in November 2007, is surprisingly deficient in giving coverage of Aila. The death and starvation of the victims of Aila are passing through the media filters.

More than a month later, the survivors are still struggling to get clean drinking water and food. Aila's victims are still suffering.

