

Climate change bangladesh

Despite producing only 0.56% of the global emissions changing our climate, Bangladesh ranks seventh on the list of countries most vulnerable to climate devastation, according to Germanwatch's 2021 Global Climate Risk Index (CRI).

This threat is not an abstract one. The data shows that from 2000 to 2019, Bangladesh suffered economic losses worth \$3.72 billion and witnessed 185 extreme weather events due to climate change.

Located east of India on the Bay of Bengal, the country is known for its many waterways, including the world-famous Ganges river. These are waterways that produce rich agricultural soil, allow extensive travel by boat, and provide access to the rest of South Asia and the world.

What's more, Bangladesh is home to the Sundarbans: the world's largest contiguous mangrove forest. This UNESCO World Heritage site both provides a livelihood for local people and makes world-renowned biodiversity possible.

What's more, a 2018 U.S. government report found that whopping 90 million Bangladeshis (56 percent of the population) live in "high climate exposure areas," with 53 million subject to "very high" exposure.

It has been estimated that by 2050, one in every seven people in Bangladesh will be displaced by climate change. Specifically, with a projected 19.6 inch (50 cm) rise in sea level, Bangladesh may lose approximately 11% of its land by then, and up to 18 million people may have to migrate because of sea-level rise alone.

Looking even further down the road, Scientific American describes how "climate change in Bangladesh has started what may become the largest mass migration in human history... Some scientists project a five-to-six foot [sea-level] rise by 2100, which would displace perhaps 50 million people."

What's more, these rising seas now threaten to inundate the Sundarbans -- the mangrove forest in southern Bangladesh. This is a doubly dangerous effect, given that this coastal forest doesn't just sustain biodiversity and livelihoods, but also shields Bangladesh from the worst of the region's many cyclones.

But sea-level rise isn't just a problem because of outright land loss. It's also a problem because of salinization: the process by which salt infiltrates agricultural land, hindering crop growth by limiting their ability to take up water.

On top of increasingly ruining crops, salinization threatens the drinking water supplies of tens of millions of people in coastal communities. Consuming this salty, contaminated water can expose populations to health problems like cardiovascular diseases.

For context, in 1973, 8.3 million hectares (321,623 square miles) of land were affected by encroaching seawater. By 2009, the number grew to over 105.6 million hectares (407,723square miles), according to Bangladesh's Soil Resources Development Institute.

This phenomenon of stronger downpours - combined with rising temperatures melting the Himalayan glaciers that feed rivers around Bangladesh - is leaving massive swaths of the country far more prone to devastating floods.

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