

The Daily Star

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Monday, February 22, 2010 11:07 AM GMT+06:00

Published On: 2010-02-16

Metropolitan

Repair Aila-hit dams to save 2 lakh homeless people

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Staff Correspondent

An alliance of development partners yesterday expressed grave concern over the fate of 2 lakh homeless people affected by the cyclone Aila, saying they may remain homeless for an indefinite period unless the damaged embankments in the coastal districts are repaired by March this year.

"We urge all development partners working under Bangladesh Development Forum and the government of Bangladesh to consider this issue of embankment reconstruction and repair as one of the top most priorities," said a statement of the national and international organisations working in the country's coastal region.

There is a serious concern among the communities and professionals and experts concerned that if the broken embankments are not reconstructed and repaired by March 2010, it would require waiting for another winter to complete the work, read the statement.

"That means, more than 200 thousand people will have to remain homeless for an indefinite time-period, which is inhuman and unacceptable on any grounds and a serious issue of human and fundamental rights violation," it added.

In this backdrop, the organisations demanded a coordinated action on this so that the reconstruction and repair procedures are completed by March 31 this year.

"We are appalled to bear witness that even after eight and half months following cyclone Aila, more than 100 thousand people from Khulna and Satkhira districts are still living in inhuman conditions on the embankments in makeshift shelters, while an additional 100 thousand people have been displaced," said the statement.

The organisations stressed that the response and rehabilitation works that they have been continuing in the affected regions are gradually appearing as a waste of limited resources, unless embankments are reconstructed and repaired.

Signatories to the statement include Emergency Capacity Building Project, ActionAid, World Concern, Concern Worldwide, Catholic Relief Service, Save the Children, USA, Sweden, Denmark and Australia, Muslim Aid, Oxfam Bangladesh Programme, Christian Aid, CARE, Coastal Association for Social Transformation Trust, Dan Church Aid, Research Initiative for Change, Nirapad, Shushilan, Jagrata Juba Sangha, Humanity Watch and Progoti.