



JUNIOR CHAMPION MAGAZINE

Listening to the experiences of children and youths in the summer floods of 2023 in India

READ 'NAVIGATING THE WATERS: LESSONS FROM WEST BENGAL'S RECENT FLOODS' ON PAGE 10

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ADN Junior Champion Magazine

Listening to the experiences of children and youths in 2023 floods across India

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About Avoidable Deaths Network (ADN):

ADN is a diverse, dynamic, inclusive, and innovative global-local membership network of experts, practitioners and researchers interested in avoiding human deaths from natural hazards, naturally triggered technological hazards and human-made hazards in low- and middle-income countries. ADN exists to help policymakers, researchers and practitioners make better decisions to save lives and reduce injuries to achieve sustainable development. ADN's purpose is aligned with the United Nations Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction's first two global targets and is a member of the [Sendai Framework's Voluntary Commitment Platform](#). On 12 March 2023, ADN launched a global campaign: [International Awareness Day for Avoidable Deaths \(IAD4AD\)](#) and the campaign slogan 'Disaster Deaths Are Avoidable'. This global campaign aims to raise the visibility of indirect disaster deaths and missing persons and to understand the causes and circumstances that lead to avoidable disaster deaths. This global campaign will be celebrated annually.



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Message from the Presidents

The **Junior Champion Magazine** is a landmark initiative for the Avoidable Deaths Network (ADN). This has been possible because of the relentless pursuit of Master Arkoneil Ghosh and Miss Prarthona Datta.

Arkoneil joined ADN three years ago. Since then, he has become an agent of change.

As the Founding Editor of the Junior Champion Magazine, Arkoneil focused the first issue on the experiences of children and youths in the summer floods of 2023, which affected 15 states of India.

The eight articles published in the first issue are telling. They capture the lived experiences of eight young authors. As reviewers, we found it at times painful to read them.

We are publishing the first issue on the 13th of October 2023 to mark 'International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction' (IDRR). This year the theme of IDRR is "Break the Cycle" of poverty, inequality and discrimination which are causes and consequences of growing disaster risk. These articles spotlight the drivers of disaster risks at the local level and how they can be mitigated.

The next issue will feature articles written by the children and youths of the Sundarbans mangrove forest and hill tracts of Bangladesh living with multiple risks and vulnerabilities. We will release this issue on the 12th of March 2023 to mark the ADN's Global Campaign 'International Day for Avoidable Deaths' (IAD4AD).

We will work with our local collaborators to support prospective young authors wherever we can so that they can tell their stories of hardships, coping and adaptation - sometimes to enlighten the readers and at other times to demand change for a better society.

ADN productions are collective efforts. The Junior Champion Magazine is no exception. We would like to thank the Editorial Board (Dr. Ayse Yildiz, Dr. Jebunnessa Chapola, Dr. Rini Sinha-Ghosh, Dr. Madhulika Sahoo and Dr. Aditya Ghosh) and ADN operation team (Ms. Lauren MacLeod, Ms. Kelly Litsoung and Mr. Alex Skinner) for bringing this Magazine to fruition.

Dr. Nibedita Ray-Bennett & Dr. Hideyuki Shiroshita

Founding Presidents,
Avoidable Deaths Network

Foreword from Professor Rajib Shaw

Disasters are major disruptions that produce staggering losses and damages in the country and people's participation in mitigating these losses and damages is of paramount importance. Our commitment towards fostering, encouraging and developing collective action will be key to combat future disasters that are increasing and being exacerbated by the impacts of climate change and other planetary processes. The Junior Champion Magazine on Avoidable Deaths is a timely and much-needed forum towards this mission.

Children are extremely important in developing effective disaster management strategies at local governance levels. Their alertness, discipline, observations as well as timely sharing of information can go a long way in developing an ethos of prevention, mitigation, preparedness and response towards disasters at the societal level. Children can also play a significant role in partnering with the administration, governance and the community in various disaster situations such as cyclones, heatwaves, tsunamis and earthquakes.

In Japan, which is a very disaster-prone country, school children are part of local disaster risk reduction plans, they are taught about various aspects of anticipating, evacuating, rescuing in various disaster situations. These children will be adults and responsible citizens of the country whose involvement in nation-building and leadership will be key towards India's vision to emerge as a global leader.

India is striving towards promoting a national resolve to mitigate the damage and destruction caused by different disasters. The Chairperson and Head of National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), the Prime Minister of India, HE Narendra Modi, has suggested a 10-point agenda for disaster risk reduction. The third agenda comprises enhancing capacity of women and agenda eight highlights the importance of building local capacity and initiatives to enhance disaster risk reduction. In both, children are critical agents of change and implementation.

We would love to hear from the children through this magazine about their experiences and observations. We wish this initiative all success.

Professor Rajib Shaw

Keio University, Japan

Distinguished/ Visiting Professor

IIT Guwahati, IISc Bengaluru and IIM Kozikode

Message from the Science Society Interface Researcher

Children hold the key to the future of our earth but their contribution in the realm of policy and governance remains under-explored at best. Climate activist Greta Thunberg showed us how children can lead the global environmental movement, which is absolutely essential to save our civilization from extinction. In India, if one has ever attended the National Children's Science Congress, an annual event organized by the Department of Science and Technology, Govt of India, one cannot help but be fascinated by the quality of grassroots innovations and local, everyday science that children use to develop small to medium technological artefacts. While attending three of these national events between 1998 and 2001, I started wondering why these brilliant children are never part of our policy dialogues, why their expertise in everyday science is not encouraged and fostered, why their fascinating technological innovations are never scaled up.

These children - majority from very modest economic and even in many cases from disadvantaged backgrounds with little or no access to resources - stunned even senior and well-known scientists present as observers and adjudicators in these events with their understanding of science, gadgets they developed, observations they shared and enterprise with which they identified various emerging problems in the environments they lived in. Despite abundance of such talents and motivation, we have largely failed to incorporate these children in grassroots science innovations towards sustainable development, mitigation of a multitude of environmental crises, fostering behavioural change, building capacity and develop channels of communication that would culminate in effective, timely, locally contextual, science-based policies in environment management and disaster risk reduction.

The Junior Champion Magazine on Avoidable Deaths from ADN is an attempt to offer the rightful space and place to children to enhance our knowledge and develop a more secure, safe and sustainable world. Stories from these children are products of sharp observations, critical thinking and offer a unique perspective into disaster risk reduction, mitigation of losses and damages from both large-scale and local, small-scale disasters and most importantly, how various unattended, often obscure risks turn into significant disasters both at the household and community levels. It is time for us to learn from our youth, the children, how they wish their world to be shaped and how they wish to proceed in this pursuit. Let the roles be reversed and allow these brilliant minds to now educate us, the adults.

Dr. Aditya Ghosh

Science Society Interface Researcher
Avoidable Deaths Network

Message from the Editors

We are Arkoneil Ghosh and Prarthona Datta, the Founding Editor and Deputy Editor of this new magazine. We are thrilled to share with you our first issue, which is dedicated to the first-hand experiences of Indian children who have endured floods.

Floods are a devastating reality for millions of people in India every year. They destroy homes, schools, and livelihoods and can profoundly impact the physical and mental health of those affected, especially children. Youth are left vulnerable due to these disasters that occur too often.

In this issue, we hear from children who have lived through floods first-hand. They share their stories of fear, loss, and resilience. They tell us about the challenges they faced and the lessons they learned. Many children have endured immense hardships, and their stories allow their voices and perspectives to be heard. Through the point-of-view of youth, we can see a new take on the difficulties they are facing since, a lot of the time, their voices are not heard. This issue aims to give children with important, impactful ideas and strategies a platform to share their knowledge through their first-hand experiences.

We hope that this issue will raise awareness of the plight of children in floods and inspire you to take action to help them, as the children themselves recommend strategies. It is essential to understand and learn about what we can do to reduce the impact of floods through the experiences these youth have shared with us all. Through their inspiring stories, we can learn why floods are occurring and how they impact people, particularly children. Additionally, we can learn what we can and need to do in response to these emergencies to assist those suffering and prevent natural hazards from happening more frequently in the future.

We are grateful for the opportunity to share these stories with you, and we hope that you will find them informative and inspiring.

Arkoneil Ghosh and Prarthona Datta

Founding Editor and Deputy Editor
Avoidable Deaths Network Junior Champion Magazine

Flooding in Assam: A Drawing

Sophia Huidrom



Class: III

School: Sanskriti- The Gurukul, Guwahat

Floods in my Village

Angad Acharya

For the last two weeks, there has been intense rain followed by a series of flash floods in and around my native village/ town. In the beginning, we were all happy experiencing the monsoon as an effect of the south-westerlies. Western disturbances produced a surge in rainfall, recording the highest precipitation in decades. There was murmuring and panic about the river overflowing. The Monsoon did help from the immense heat and the blazing sun.

My village is near Mandi, nestled on the banks of the river Beas. The river, by the third week of June, has been breaching both its banks with an increase in the torrential rain. unprecedented surge was prompted by the release of water through the floodgates of the Bhakra Nangal Dam.

The weather forecast warned of heavy rains, which would trigger more floods in our area. The next morning, I woke up with the sound of panicking everywhere. As I woke up, I realised that I was in the middle of a disaster. I stepped into a rash-flowing pool of water. My parents collected all our important belongings and held me tight to get onto the canoe sent by the rescue services. We managed to reach Kullu through extreme risks where our lives were in danger in the turbulent water flowing from of the river Beas. The situation was even worse there... The flood not only destroyed the communication lines and toppled the electric poles but also loosened the rock strata, increasing the chances of landslides and mudflow there. Reaching Kullu, we were thrown into panic with the news of death and devastation from a massive landslide taking the lives of many people.

Just three days of rain took such a huge toll on the local economy and the lives of many people. It kept me thinking why such floodings have become so frequent which now is common in every monsoon season. Is this a natural phenomenon, or has it been triggered by human interplay that has resulted in climate change which then increases the frequency of these floods?

Deforestation has reduced the river catchment area in the region. Hydropower projects are causing soil erosions, the river flow has been diverted through human-made tunnels. Burrowing through the mountains has increased the risks of flooding during a cloud burst. Excessive tourism, and construction work have encroachment of the forested lands.

I feel that the government should put some restrictions on tourism in the region. Only eco-friendly hydropower projects should be allowed. plantation drives must be encouraged which can hopefully make Himachal the beautiful place it used to be.

Class: VI

School: Orchids The International School, Thane, Maharashtra

Navigating the Waters: Lessons from West Bengal's Recent Floods

Anushka Konar

As a 17-year-old residing in West Bengal, the monsoon floods in our state have left a lasting impact on me and my family. In this article, I will discuss my observations and ideas on how we can better anticipate and lessen the impact of future disasters. My family and I were seriously affected by the recent floods. Our home and the surrounding area were flooded as a result of the constant rain and rising water levels. It was terrifying to have to leave our house and our beloved possessions behind. The emotional toll was severe, and it served as a reminder of our susceptibility to disasters by natural hazards. We faced a variety of difficulties after the floods. First of all, since nearby markets and shops were submerged, access to food became a serious issue. Our education was disrupted because of the extended closure of schools. These difficulties made it clear that stronger disaster planning was required.

I would recommend various strategies to my local government to get around the obstacles we encountered if the local authorities had asked for our input. First and foremost, having a well-organised emergency response plan is critical, as is stockpiling necessities like food, water, and medical supplies. In order to prevent serious disruptions to kids' education, the government should also give priority to restoring educational facilities and offering temporary substitutes.

I suggest employing a multifaceted strategy to lowering the risk of flooding in our homes. First, spend money on solid infrastructure, such as embankments, better drainage systems, and flood barriers. These actions can assist in redirecting and containing flooding. Second, to strengthen natural flood control mechanisms, encourage afforestation and sustainable land-use techniques. Third, conduct awareness programmes and drills to inform the neighbourhood about flood preparedness and response. Finally, including locals, especially young individuals, in decision-making on catastrophe management.

Personally, I would approach a flood in the near future in a proactive manner. I would put together an emergency supply kit with non-perishable food, water purification equipment, first-aid materials, and critical documents. Another top priority would be to stay informed about weather alerts and evacuation plans. In addition, I would take a proactive role in neighbourhood flood preparedness and response projects.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I have learned a lot from the monsoon floods in West Bengal about resiliency and readiness. Disasters caused by natural hazards cannot be avoided, but by taking precautions, their consequences can be reduced. By working with local authorities and adopting a comprehensive strategy for flood risk reduction, we can make our communities safer and more resilient for both the present and future generations.

Class: XI

School: La Martiniere For Girls, Kolkata

When the Waters Came: A Flood Memoir

Aryaman Nath

I heard an indistinct chatter on the television about the persistent rains that had been continuing for the last three days due to low pressure, as well as about the gates of Hirakud Dam (the world's longest earthen dam) being opened one after the other to release the extra water required to maintain the dam's safe water level. My sister and I were overjoyed because we had been granted a day off from school. My dad and grandparents, with whom we shared our home, were discussing the rising water levels in the Mahanadi River (Odisha's biggest and one of India's greatest rivers). They indicated that if the rain persisted, we would be dealing with a flood situation. And so it was.

It was just another night. Because of the chilly and windy weather, I fell asleep easily. My grandma woke me up in the middle of the night and instructed me to pack my belongings. When I inquired, she informed me that the water level was steadily increasing and that the home would soon be submerged. When others were packing critical papers, electronics, life-sustaining materials, and food items, I was packing my books because I had my half-yearly examination in a few days.

We waited till the sun came up. We went on the flooded roads to our relatives' house which is at a high height, as the water had reached knee level. We returned to our house after a day. My family members declined to accompany me. But I begged them to let me come. The items in the house were scattered about. Many items were turned upside down around the house. Water had left a trace on the walls up to a foot from the ceiling.

All the clothes were wet. Luckily, I had packed my books. But I was saddened to see my toys lying here and there soaked in water. I was about to switch on the light when suddenly my father shouted at me and barred me from touching any electrical appliance as it might have fatal consequences. My parents and a few labourers put the things back up in the house. Many things were thrown away including my drawings and arts and crafts. My memories since childhood. We shifted back to our home after a week. Still, the house was damp and I got a different feeling in the same house. After a day or two I suffered from fever. It was diagnosed as typhoid after testing. I could not appear for my half-yearly examination as it took me many days to recover.

I experienced a disastrous flood in my own town, in my own house, for the first time in my life.

Class: X

School: Vimla Convent School, Kalahandi, Odisha

The Floods of Himachal, 2023

Anika

2023 has been a very disastrous year for Himachal Pradesh, where I live. The rains of this year have destroyed the livelihoods of many. People have to live in shelters, completely dependent on the administration and NGOs that donate goods.

It was really painful to see how people had to flee their homes, and children including myself weren't able to attend school because of roadblocks. People were kept in community halls. Schools were closed. People lost their loved ones. Heritage and infrastructure were destroyed. The scarcity of water affected almost everyone in Himachal Pradesh. Because of this, drinking water, hygiene, and cooking food became a big task, especially for the affected.

This was the first time I had experienced something like this. I was able to lend a hand to the displaced people. I volunteered for an NGO named 'Doers'. During my field visits, I observed how people had lost their homes and those peoples' homes that were in danger due to risk of trees falling over. We went around Shimla, distributing relief kits to people living in shelters. Everyday essentials such as water bottles, milk, and ready-to-eat kits. Also, hygiene products such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, and sanitary pads.

In my opinion, if we were to ever experience such times again, we could be better prepared by doing some things differently. Trees that are on the verge of falling over should be removed. People living in dangerous areas should be relocated. Construction should be done in sustainable ways. I would never wish to see my city in these conditions again.

Class: VI

School: Loreto Convent School, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh

Flood Impacts in North Bengal

Ishani Karmakar

Every year in India, a lot of states witness devastating floods. This year, too, was no exception, and millions were severely affected due to floods. West Bengal was one of the worst sufferers. The Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee, through a series of tweets, highlighted the widespread impacts of the floods which included damages to private property, infrastructure such as roads and trainlines, and sufferings of people marooned. Apart from these losses, human lives were also lost.

One such incident took place in a remote area of North Bengal named Falakata. A little girl belonging to a poor family was the victim. She was nine years old and studying in grade IV. She lived with her parents and two elder sisters. Falakata was also flooded, and hence, the schools were closed. During one of the flood days, the girl was playing alone near a stream and enjoying her own company. But suddenly, one of her slippers was swept away accidentally by the flood streams. So, she tried to get hold of her slipper, but the water current was so strong that it swept her away. A search team was informed and set out to look for her, but she was not found anywhere. The next evening, the water police discovered her body stuck in rocks under the flood water.

Another such case occurred recently in a place called Bagdogra. A boy from class XI was washed away by the flood waters. It happened when he went to the back of his house for some chores, where a river stream had overflowed due to the heavy rains. Unfortunately, he accidentally slipped and fell into the water and got swept away by the currents of the stream. When he, too, was nowhere found, he was searched for everywhere, and after 36 hours of search, his body was found under 20 feet of the water.

Such deaths and many others could have been avoided by the presence of an adult nearby or by some other means; with the help of a little bit of carefulness and measures to control the flooding by the local governments of those areas, as well as precautions by their family members. We all need to think how this could be done in a concerted manner by the society.

Class: IX

School: DAV School
Siliguri, West Bengal



The Hidden Cost of Flood Disaster

Kritika Mitra

Floods affect millions of people worldwide each year. They occur when land that is normally dry experiences an overflow of water, caused by a variety of factors such as hurricanes, tropical storms, dam failures, and flash floods. Coastal areas are more vulnerable to floods, particularly during monsoon and hurricane seasons, but floods can occur anywhere and vary in size and duration.

Floods can have a devastating impact on people and the environment. They can cause loss of life, damage to property and infrastructure, disruption of essential services, and spread of waterborne diseases. Floods can also damage ecosystems and wildlife habitats.

In the recent floods in Delhi, my family and I experienced stress, anxiety, fear, sadness, irritability, difficulty concentrating, and anger outbursts. The drinking water supply was affected, and waterborne diseases and dengue started spreading. The vegetable supply was also affected, and prices became very high. Schools, markets, and other important public places were closed, and cars and buses were submerged underwater. My school was closed for one week, as per orders of the Delhi Government.

People staying near the Yamuna River were worst affected and had to be rehabilitated at some other dry place.

Floods are natural hazards as such they are difficult to control. However, there are measures that can be taken to mitigate their impact, such as building dams and canals, regularly cleaning debris from drains, and developing early warning systems. It is also important to raise awareness of flood risks and preparedness measures so that people are better equipped to cope with the aftermath of a flood.

Class: VI

School: Basava International School, Delhi



India's Flood Fury: 15 States Affected

Shellby Clair Ramani

Numerous people lost their lives as a result of the heavy rain and subsequent flooding, and countless families were forced to endure terrible suffering in India. Fortunately, because we live on a higher floor, neither of these situations happened to my family or me. I did, however, notice other people's upsetting experiences. They struggled with a sense of unease about the future, wondering how long the deluge would go on, how they would survive if it went on for days, and how they would find refuge now that their homes had been flooded. Families who had lost a loved one also had to deal with the concern of possible further casualties. Realising that we could only do so much action before we had to turn to the government for help was depressing.

It is crucial to have a comprehensive strategy that covers both short-term problems and long-term solutions in order to deal with flood conditions. This comprises: making clear evacuation preparations and sharing them to assist people in understanding what to do and where to go in the case of a flood. Setting up a trustworthy communication system to enable people to remain informed and connected during a flood. The probability of flooding can be decreased, and the effects of floods when they do occur can be lessened, by making investments in improved drainage systems and infrastructure. Maintaining and cleaning sewers, drains, and waterways on a regular basis will assist in avoiding obstructions and floods. Residents will be better able to safeguard themselves and their property in the event of a flood if they are informed of flood preparedness and safety procedures. Giving medical aid is crucial for those who have been hurt or forced to flee their homes due to flooding. Encouragement of community participation can assist in increasing resilience and make sure that everyone is included in preparations for and responses to floods.

Here's what I would do differently:

- Stay informed about weather forecasts and flood alerts
- Create an emergency kit that includes all essential items
- Store valuable items and important documents in waterproof containers
- Keep communication devices charged and have backup power sources available
- Participate in community preparedness initiatives
- Prioritise personal safety
- Post-Flood Recovery

Identifying susceptible regions and make appropriate plans, conduct routine flood mapping and risk assessments will enable you to recognise the potential for flooding in your region and take precautions against it.

Informing locals about flood dangers, preparatory measures, and evacuation protocols, In the case of a flood, will assist people in protecting both themselves and their property.

Elevate important infrastructure to lessen its vulnerability to floods, including roads, bridges, and utilities. Although this is a long-term solution, it is crucial for lowering the danger of flooding in sensitive locations.

Set up sophisticated flood monitoring and warning systems. If a flood is approaching, this will allow people enough time to get ready and escape.

Class: VIII

School: Carmel Convent School, Delhi



My Personal Flood Experience on July 27, 2023

Shubojit Dey

On the morning of 27th July 2023, I was awakened and fearful by the sound of thunder and lightning. When I peeped out of my bedroom window, I noticed that the streets were already flooded. I definitely knew that today would be a very difficult day.

The floodwaters kept getting higher all day. We were constantly checking on our car that was parked on the street. The flood water had almost reached the doors of the car and the tires were already submerged in the water. Schools and colleges were declared closed, so I had to miss an entire day of school. We had no electricity as the electricity provider had switched off the main connection to the area to prevent unexpected accidents involving residents. With no electricity, we had to take extra care of our pets to make them feel safe. We were forced to consume small amounts of food and other necessities as the stores around us were all closed.

We were all safe by the time night fell, but we were concerned about our possessions because the water had already penetrated our main gate. The electricity was still not on and we had to spend the night in the light of candles. The flood caused a lot of trouble, not just for me and my family but also for many people living around us, especially in low-lying areas. However, this incident did give me a lot of painful experiences. I realised there is lot more to reflect upon regarding disaster preparedness. I discovered how crucial it is to be ready for disasters. It taught me the importance of preparedness, resilience, and community engagement to face such challenges.

If I had been contacted by my local government, I would have suggested some solutions to deal with these difficulties, such as opening shelters for people who had to evacuate their homes, supplying the flood-affected people with food and other necessities, providing information about flood safety and how to prepare themselves for such natural disasters.

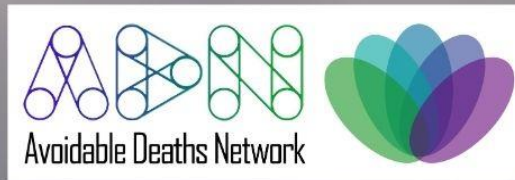
If ever I experience such flood like situation in the future, I would definitely want to do things differently such as, I will ensure that we have enough food, water, medicines and other essential necessities in hand. I will keep myself updated with the weather forecast and be prepared to evacuate if the situation demands.

In order to lower the risk of flooding in my neighbourhood, I would suggest the installation of a good drainage system that would help to channel the rainwater and also to raise the elevation of the houses in the locality so that there is less possibility of water entering the houses. Plant a lot of trees in the area. Encourage people to keep the gutters clean and plastic-free to prevent clogging and educate everyone about flood safety and how to prevent flooding.

I hope that sharing my flood story will help others to be better equipped to cope with disasters.

Class: VII

School: RBK International School, Thane, Mumbai



JUNIOR CHAMPION

MAGAZINE

THE END

Junior Champion Logo Competition

Design our Junior Champion Logo and have it featured on every subsequent issue of the ADN Junior Champion Magazine!

Dimensions: 2000x2000 pixels (square)

Colours: Green, Blue, Purple, White, Black (see our lotus flower above)

Text: 'Junior Champions: Dedicated to reducing avoidable disaster deaths'

Deadline: 1 December 2023

Send To: contact@avoidable-deaths.net

Requirements: Please provide your full name, age, school, address, and email address of your guardian/ parent at the end of the page.

The winner will be selected by the ADN Junior Champion Magazine editors, Mr. Arkoneil Ghosh and Miss Prarthona Datta.

Good luck!