

# FLOOD-HIT KHALIAJURY HAOR School attendance falls as people migrate

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Hundreds of students with their family members in flood-hit Khalajury Haor area of Netrakona are migrating to different places including Dhaka in search of job for survival as earning opportunities have become scarce in the area.

Some 30,000 families, mostly marginal farmers and sharecroppers, were badly hit by the flood in Khalajury upazila, said Mohammed Tofael Ahmed, upazila nirbahi officer (UNO).

Of them, 17,000 families are under Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) and Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) networks, said the UNO.

Jamal Uddin, headmaster of Krishnapur AAP High School in

Khalajury, said out of a total 525 students of the school, around 200 have migrated to other places with their families for survival.

"Some 60 students of my school have left the area in recent weeks. The flash flood has caused hardship to thousands of families in the backward area," said Md Ali Ajman, headmaster of Kutubpur Public High School in Khalajury.

Abu Bakar Siddique, upazila secondary education officer, said there are some 7200 students in secondary and higher secondary levels in the upazila.

Of them, some 15 percent have already left the school and the situation may worsen if the present food crisis is not met, he said.

"I had to leave Khalajury for

Dhaka with my two school and college going girls. We don't know when we will return to our village," said Swadhin Mia, a day labourer.

Md Rafiqul Islam, upazila assistant primary education officer, said there are 19,727 students in 65 primary schools in the upazila but some 2000 students remained absent during the last two months.

The students should be brought under special feeding programmes to keep them in schools, said the official.

Sanwaruzzaman Talukder Jausef, chairman of Khalajury Sadar Union Parishad (UP), said there are some 5000 families in the union and 2295 of them are under VGF and VGD programmes.

Nazim Uddin Sarker, chairman

of Krishnapur UP, said there are some 4600 affected families in Krishnapur union and of them 2469 are under VGF and VGD networks. Government relief of 90 tonnes of rice and Tk 12 lakh have been distributed among the families so far.

Necessary measures to increase food aid should be taken right now to protect the flood victims including thousands of students from hunger, said the two chairmen.

Seven OMS centres are running in Khalajury upazila headquarters to support the flood victims, said the UNO. One tonne of rice is allocated for every centre per day, he said.

On migration of hundreds of students with their families, the

UNO said, they heard about the matter and are looking into the issue.

The recent flood has wreaked havoc on agriculture and fish farming in Khalajury and Mohanganj upazilas.

The flash flood submerged 69,710 out of 184,320 hectares of land targeted for Boro cultivation in eight upazilas of Netrakona, mostly in Khalajury and Mohanganj, said Bilash Chandra Pal, deputy director of the Department of Agriculture Extension in the district.

Ashraf Uddin Ahmed, district fisheries officer of Netrakona, said 118 tonnes of fish worth around Tk 2 crore died in Khalajury and Mohanganj in recent flood.

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