

Geography: Bangladesh Floods 1998

Between July and September in 1998, Bangladesh suffered one of its worse floods ever. Despite flooding being common in Bangladesh, the 1998 floods resulted in over 1000 deaths and 30 million people being made homeless. Normally the monsoon rainfall is good for the people of Bangladesh, however when there is too much; flooding occurs such as in 1998, When there is too little it causes drought such as in 1987. Natural causes of the flooding are, due to Bangladesh, being a very low lying country, with 70% of its land area being less than 1 metre above sea level and 80% of it being floodplain. Another natural reason is that Bangladesh has a huge delta made by the Ganges and Brahmaputra converging and formed from silt deposited by the river as it joins the sea. A huge volume of water travels through both the rivers which both have large drainage basins which increase the flood risk. Also during the spring, the melting snow from the Himalayas, increases the chances of flooding as lots of melt water enter the rivers at their source. Not all of the causes of flooding are natural some are man-made. Deforestation stops rain from being infiltrated. Without this form of interception and evapotranspiration more water has been entering the rivers thus increasing the flood risk. Another reason is Bangladesh is an LEDC and its lack of money and heavy debt mean that little money is spent on flood defences and many existing defences lack upkeep.

What were the consequences of the 1998 floods?

There were many consequences of the flood, some good and some bad. A bad result of the floods was that 30 million people were made homeless and 1,070 people died. Many people were killed however not many due to drowning but ironically due to lack of water. Lack of clean water meant they had to drink water which was contaminated with dead bodies which gave them diseases such as cholera and typhoid. Over $\frac{2}{3}$ of land area was covered by water and the capital, Dhaka was 2 metres underwater. Food supplies were severely affected with 668,529ha of crops being destroyed. The impact on the economy led to over 400 clothing factories forced to close and export industries seeing a 20% decrease in production. However, there is a positive effect of the flooding. It provides water for the crops and deposits rich fertile soil which provide key nutrients enabling people to grow crops.